

Building Belonging in Muslim Moscow: Identity and Group Practices in the Post-Soviet Capital

Charles Aprile

Honors Thesis

Submitted to the Department of Sociology and Anthropology
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Degree of Bachelor of the Arts

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Maya Nadkarni

April 30th, 2018

Swarthmore College

ABSTRACT

Due to the scale of migration that took place after 1991, Moscow is both an ideal and unique space in studies of race, ethnicity and group identity in the of Post-Soviet sphere. Moscow is unique in its history as the center of the multinational Soviet nation-state, as well as its renewed social and economic centrality to much of the former Soviet Union today. The city's layered and contradictory spaces bear testament to how the changing power relations of post-socialist transition affect the embeddedness of group identity in the city's daily life. Due to this layered past, Moscow has a pronounced lack of ethnic or racial residential segregation. This reality necessitates novel frameworks to explain how social belonging and exclusion are spatially inscribed into Moscow's urban fabric. This study uses historical context and ethnographic, interview and participant-observation among Muslim migrants to understand the mechanisms that reproduce, reify, complicate, and splinter Muslim group identities in the Russian capital. In "migrant markets," the findings of this research indicate how Muslims use the spaces to engage in workplace practices that serve to validate their varied cultural, collective and individual identities. At the same time, the stratified occupational structures in markets serve to reify Russian stereotypes against migrants and categorize them as "other." In observing religious activity in Moscow, this study found a serious disconnect between government-approved religious leaders and their supposed constituencies. Those leaders engage in discourses that seek Muslim inclusion into Russian society, yet themselves exclude working-class migrants from positions of leadership in their institutions. In response to such dual exclusions, many migrants coalesce into subaltern groups who periodically retreat from the city's public sphere and who perform and take pride their identities. These groups also serve to fulfill migrants' practical needs through grassroots ethnic networks. All the above practices respond to conditions in the social, spatial and historical specificity of present-day Moscow, demonstrating how collective subjectivity and identity are deeply affected by settings of migration.

List of Figures

Figure 1: Orthodox icon with minaret in the back.....	4
Figure 2: Police and worshippers.	6
Figure 3: Second-floor view of Moskva Shopping Center.....	73
Figure 4: Porters at Moskva with numbered uniforms.....	82
Figure 5: Store in the "Muslim Aisle".....	87
Figure 6: Ethnic Restaurants at TK Sadovod.....	89
Figure 7: Iftar at the Memorial Mosque.....	98
Figure 8: Warm-up at Moscow "Alish".....	109

Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	2
Acknowledgements	3
Introduction: Framing Belonging in Moscow	4
Methodology	11
Structure of the Thesis.	15
Chapter 2: Historical Context	19
How Soviet Policy Constructed Nationality	21
Migration and Urbanization in the USSR	28
Moscow	31
Nation-Building in Post-Soviet Russia	36
Islam and the Russian State.....	40
Making Sense of Past and Present	45
Chapter 3: Theoretical Context.....	46
Group Identity and the Mechanisms of Belonging.....	46
Cities and Global Migration	56
Chapter 4: Markets and Practices of Group Identity.....	67
The Emergence of “Migrant” Commercial Spaces in Russia	70
Organized Informality.....	76
Institutionalized Practices of Difference.....	81
Collective Identity Formation and Solidarity.....	85
Conclusion: Markets and Post-Socialist Life in the Age of Diversity	90
Chapter 5: Ethnic and Religious Publics and Counter Publics	92
A Typical Iftar Evening	97
Hegemonic Multiculturalism and the Muslim Moral Public.....	98
The MosDUM Youth Group	104
Moskva Alish: A Kyrgyz Male Counterpublic	107
Conclusions: Group Identity and the Post-Socialist City	115
Summary of Main Findings.....	116
Publics, Urban Marginality and Post-Soviet Legacies.....	120
Bibliography	124

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank my many subjects, as this work would have not been possible without their help, incredible hospitality and patience.

The idea of this work first came during a semester abroad with the IHP: Cities of the 21st Century program. I would like to thank Dr. Carmen Medeiros and Dr. Juan Arbona for stimulating my existing passion for the everyday life of cities and helping me gain important conceptual tools in the study of urban marginality.

Research for this thesis was conducted over two summers. I would like to thank the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship Program, director Dr. Anthony Foy and my mentor Dr. Tariq al-Jamil for providing me with the opportunity to pursue this research interest. My first summer of background research was done at the University of Chicago's Summer Research Training program, where I was greatly assisted in my writing and literature review by Christopher Todd, a Doctoral Candidate in the Department of History.

In Moscow, I participated in the School of Russian and Asian Studies and was hosted by Moscow State University's Department of Philology. My research in Moscow was greatly facilitated by the help and advice of numerous individuals. I would like to extend a special thank you to Dr. Jennifer Wilson, Ksenia Nouril, Victoria Lomashko, Anna Moiseenko, Evgeni Varshaver.

At Swarthmore, I would like to thank the whole Sociology/Anthropology Department. A thank you to Rose Maio for her constant help in the organizing my major and thesis. I would also to express my gratitude to Dr. Farha Ghannam for her feedback on my project and her mentorship and support throughout my time here. Synthesizing the massive amount of information from my fieldwork was difficult, but I could not have done it without the extraordinary help and constant feed back of my thesis advisor, Dr. Maya Nadkarni.

Introduction: Framing Belonging in Moscow

In the early morning hours of June 24th, 2017, thousands of people shuffled off the train at the Prospekt Mira station in Moscow's Northern Central District. The languages they spoke varied from Uzbek to Farsi to Russian, but as they met each other, their greetings asserted their religious commonality: *Eid Mubarak*.¹ Ethnically heterogeneous as it was, the group was composed mostly of men. As they emerged from the station en masse, their clothing asserted a



Figure 1: Orthodox icon with minaret in the back.

plethora of collective identities as well, expressing ethnic variations of a unified Muslim *Ummah*.²

Some of the believers wore beards and Pashtun *pakols*, Kyrgyz *kalpaks* or Turkic *tubeteika* or *doppi*³ caps, while others were simply dressed for the rainy weather in jeans and poncho jackets.

Beyond clothing, many of them were phenotypically “different” from the Russian soldiers who nervously guarded the metro: their varied faces (*litsa*) were generally darker than those

of the Russian military stationed at the barricades

and metal detectors. As I walked with them, we passed a line of Russian Orthodox icons, conspicuously set up on the way to the Mosque (Figure 1).

¹ “Blessed Eid.” Traditional greeting on Eid al-Fitr, the end of the holy month of Ramadan.

² Word denoting the transnational Muslim community.

³ All are caps associated with Central Asian ethnicities, worn at special occasions

Anticipating large crowds for *Eid al-Fitr* that often number more than 250,000 people who congregate in the area around the Cathedral Mosque, local newspapers reported official road closures for the holiday in tones that implied inconvenience for “regular” Russians. Officials designated an area of approximately 0.2 square miles where prayer was to take place around the Cathedral Mosque. Upon exiting the station, police buses blocked off the street and directed the crowd towards the designated prayer areas. The space inside the secure perimeter and barricades set up by the police was already packed with believers setting up their prayer rugs by the time much of the late-arriving crowd came, and people started moving to side streets that hadn’t been formally cordoned off for prayer. As many hurried to set up their prayer rugs before the start of *Azan*,⁴ women and children weaved through the crowds, asking for the last alms of the month of Ramadan. Women vendors set up sheets selling everything from phone chargers to fidget spinners, taking care to avoid approaching police officers by packing up and running to the next block to quickly sell their wares (that they lacked a proper permit for). People handed out cards advertising immigration lawyers, free instant SIM cards, traditional clothing stores and halal restaurants. As prayer started, men were still running to set their mats up to on a side avenue to pray *namaz*.⁵ The boulevards were densely packed with people as far as the eye could see. Believers prayed, standing, bowing and prostrating themselves in the direction of Mecca, performing *rakat*⁶ and bowing to the distant sounds of the *takbir*⁷ emanating from the Mosque, which was out of sight of most believers. While each individual recited verses of the Qur’an, waves of people moved in synchrony. In the span of a few minutes, it was over and along with it, the month of Ramadan. After finishing their prayers, people shared cigarettes and fresh samosas

⁴ Call to prayer.

⁵ Turkic word for prayer, also known as *salat*.

⁶ Prescribed movements during prayer

⁷ Component of prayer, asserting that “God is the greatest”

as a collective return to dietary normalcy and small vices. As crowds of believers descended upon them, street vendors sold out of pastries in a matter of minutes.

As believers began to walk back to the metro to return home, the police barricaded certain streets to divert the crowds towards already packed metro stations (Figure 2). This caused confusion as crowds of people formed at the police barricades, pushing past officers who shouted into loudspeakers: “Citizens, please return in the direction of the Dostoyevskaya station, Prospekt Mira station is closed.” The word “citizens,” (*grazhdanye*) was spoken with a tinge of irony, as officers pushed and hit people with nightsticks. As collective frustration grew, people in the crowd began to chant “*Allahu Akbar*” as they pushed past officers and broke the police line. The chants and pushing seemed to convey a small sense of satisfaction. The strength in their numbers conveyed a majoritarian feeling rarely felt as a Muslim in Moscow. Despite the



Figure 2: Police and worshippers.

crowd’s sense of small victories, the two main proximate metro stations appeared shuttered with guards at their entrances, and buses to the center were inexplicably not running. This “blockade” left many people stranded and waiting to enter the metro station at Dostoyevskaya, the only open station for miles, for over two hours. As we waited for the bus into the center that seemed to never come, I

asked an Uzbek member of the crowd what he thought of it all, he replied: “It’s an inconvenience, not only a lack of care for Muslims, but a lack of a comprehension of reality, that we are here. (*Miy zdes*)”

My experience observing Eid in Moscow left me with much to think about. What I had just witnessed was a collective expression of faith, an assertion of presence and community: not only a religious or metaphysical one, but one grounded in a set of experiences in the material space of a city. Members of the Muscovite *ummah* are not just spatially-proximate guest workers brought to a rapidly developing city by globalization, but subjects produced by the material and ideological forces of a specific post-colonial and post-socialist relationship between their home countries and Russia.

A de-facto ideological and policy-driven dynamic of Russian center and Muslim periphery persisted throughout the years of the Soviet Union. Within this framework, collective understandings of Muslim place in Russian society have been shaped by shared and contradictory historical memories of an official policy of socialist, anti-racist ideology and ethnic categorization. These ideological legacies interact with the current redeployment of identity-based political expression in both grassroots identity movements and Russia's current 'top-down' delineations of nationalist belonging.

Furthermore, the institutional legacies of the strict internal migration policy of the Soviet Union interact with capitalism's demand for cheap, precarious and exploitable labor. This contradictory institutional dialectic reproduces a system of tolerated illegality, where migrants are legally excluded from most of the benefits of legal residence, while their labor is essential for the daily functioning of the city. At the same time, Russia's "post-secular" return to religious incorporation into the state presents both opportunities of Muslim assertiveness in public life, as well as more mechanisms for those in power to exclude immigrants from cultural citizenship (Habermas 2008).

Given this context, the mass congregation during Eid functioned as collective assertion of spatial belonging and a right to the “postsecular city” (Beaumont and Baker 2011; Harvey 2008). In this instance, participants asserted their belonging in public space as members a segment of the Muslim community that has historical claims to Russia, and that is institutionalized, however poorly, into the Russian state. The social, commercial and religious activity of Eid was just one of many spatial expressions of what Saskia Sassen defines as “presence” that I witnessed (Sassen 2012). In Sassen’s words, such practices create spaces “where the powerless can make history even if they do not get empowered” (2012; 1). Thus, contentious spatial assertions, combined with scattered institutions serving concrete and subjective immigrant needs function as acts of resistance and survival in the face of official exclusion from larger society. This idea of group presence shaping history has proven key to understanding Muslim existences in Moscow. Presence has guided this research as an account of how Muslim immigrants, excluded from hegemonic normative conceptions of political and social citizenship, shape the history of Moscow by their very presence in the cities varied spaces.

The presence of a parallel institutional infrastructure in Moscow serving migrants has been referred as a “parallel city” or “second society.” (Varshaver et al. 2014, Tyuryukanova 2009) Theorists advocating this model see it as valuable descriptive framework of the set of formal and semi-formal practices and interpersonal networks that allow migrants to survive as cultural “others” in Moscow. While generating a vocabulary to describe the networks of migrant institutions in Moscow that are largely invisible to many ethnic Russians is important, focusing on parallel societies risks obscuring the intersections such institutions and practices have with “mainstream” society. As Sassen asserts, both the citizen and the immigrant must be positioned as “urban subjects,” rather than essentially different ones, as much “anti-immigrant and racist

commentary does.” (2012, 3) The various institutions within the “migrant” Moscovs (Muslim Moscow, Tajik Moscow, Kyrgyz Moscow) are in fact embedded in the daily functions of the city. Their members are all “Muscovites,” in the broadest most significant sense of the word. As urban subjects of Moscow, they shape and are shaped by their daily life in the city.

Collectively, migrant life in Moscow shows how implicit claims on space serve to fulfill economic, material, and spiritual needs in the city. Such practices are integral to the way Muslim migrants form new diasporic and religious identities that are not merely translocations of identities and customs of their “homeland-rooted” cultures. Instead, their collective practices take on new meanings that are embedded in daily life in the city. Illustrating the development of such new parameters of belonging allows us to begin to understand how religion, migration, nationality and ethnicity are shaped and inscribed in Moscow’s post-Soviet spaces.

This study focuses on how global and local factors converge to affect the experience of belonging for migrants in the historic and spatial specificity of present-day Moscow. Russia’s tumultuous transition to a market economy provides us with an especially stark and dramatic case of the global forces of markets and migration being localized, not only in space, but also within people themselves. Labor migrants are those who are most deeply affected by the forces of globalization and the market. Their social, economic and political belonging in a physical space are subject to the instability of the ebb and flow of intangible economic forces and political tides. Thus, it is important to develop methodologies to analyze the relationship these patterns have with migrant social practice: not only as shaped by these processes but shaping them as well.

This study demonstrates how the development of capitalist relations of power create new stakes and possibilities for Muslim incorporation into society. These recent developments are

embedded in Moscow's post-socialist institutional and social context, and guide how subaltern Muslim groupness is inscribed in the city's spaces. In this context of a lack of residential segregation and capitalist hyper-accumulation on the backs of Muslim migrant labor, commercial spaces serve as important spaces of permanent presence where Muslims make individual and collective claims as workers, consumers, users and "productive" citizens. At the same time, Russian stereotypes of Muslims interact with the top-down, privatized, and semi-formal governance of these vast spaces of capital to expose migrants to egregious patterns of discrimination, exploitation and institutionalized practices of "othering" as low-wage workers.

Non-economic practices related to religious worship, recreation and civil society also interact with Moscow's urban context to validate and problematize group identities. Muslims in Moscow suffer from a dual exclusion: firstly, as shown by my description of Eid, with only four official mosques in the city, Muslims lack access to sufficient physical space to worship that is proportional to their numbers. As many of Moscow's estimated two million Muslims are unregistered, they do not figure into formal estimations of the community's size, which officially numbers around six-hundred-thousand. Secondly, the diverse Muslims who attended Eid, and who worship in official religious spaces are not necessarily represented in the leadership of institutionalized Muslim civil society. Those who fill leadership roles are generally well-integrated members of the Tatar ethnicity, whose disciplining discourses and acquiescence to state power alienate many Muslims from the Caucasus and Central Asia. In the face of an alienating and hegemonic discourse of dominant Muslim institutions, members of subaltern groups coalesce into "counter-publics," where discourses and practices do not fit into the moral frames of respectability provided by Muslim leadership (Fraser 1990).

In both the economic and non-economic realms, Muslims engage in performative group and individual practices of identity formation that tie previous “common sense” understandings of identity to their lived experiences in the city of Moscow. It is within this dialectic between the previous and the current social context that diasporic identities change in degree and significance to make sense of the contradictions of daily life in a globalized city. When their social and material needs become entangled in the city’s daily social processes, migrant subjects make claims to meet those needs by accessing identities to which they believe to belong. The social networks tied to those identities provide discursive tools to make sense of their place in the city, and material tools to survive in its hostile environment. Thus, place is central to identity formation. Indeed, it is in this process of shifting self-understanding and self-interest that Muslims in Moscow become urban subjects: *Muslim Muscovites*.

Methodology

My study took place over two months in Moscow and combines about 120 hours of ethnography and participant observation with loosely structured interviews. As I initially struggled with the boundaries of my focus population, some notes are needed about the social categories that are focus of my interview and ethnographic work. Taking my target audience as “Muslim” as a naturalized given in the study risks using “pre-constructed categories of common sense” as my category of analysis (Brubaker 2012, 2). Instead of accepting and naturalizing such categories, this study seeks to demonstrate how their existence within discourse and practice shape people’s daily lives.

Furthermore, there are risks in aspects of my approach that focus on the public religiosity of Muslims. Those risk involve reinforcing preconceived narratives of Muslims as particularly publicly and dangerously religious. Rather than using “Muslim” as a “master status” that

subsumes all other aspects of identity for my target group, I use Rogers Brubaker's analytic framework to emphasize that: "'Muslim' designates not a homogenous and solidary *group* but a heterogeneous *category*" (Brubaker 2012, 5). Furthermore, this research, among other things, looks at Muslim group identity as both a category and practice that interacts with political-economy and other categories of belonging and exclusion.

The group boundaries that I observed were always fluid and contingent on individual and collective practices of identification. Being in Russia throughout the month of Ramadan gave me the opportunity to witness some of the social dynamics internal to Moscow's diverse Muslim communities. Much of the practices that were formally geared towards identifying what it means to be "Muslim" took place in civil society organizations that I gained access to through attending nightly public *iftar*,⁸ at a large gazebo outside the Memorial Mosque. There I observed nightly programming that was organized by the tent's sponsor, the pro-Kremlin MosDUM (The Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the City of Moscow). Through the *iftars* I became acquainted with people at all levels of involvement in Muslim life in Moscow. I was seated next to migrants, curious Russians and members of youth associations, and had nightly conversations with my diverse arrays of neighbors. Upon hearing about my research, members of the Muslim youth group that organized and ran the nightly *iftar* invited me to several of their biweekly meetings. The youth group was mostly composed of upwardly mobile members of the Tatar ethnicity with institutionalized cultural and legal connections to Russia. Attending the meetings and activities, I observed the assumptions and priorities of this dominant segment of Muslim society in Moscow. My conversations with members also helped me gain an understanding of the personal priorities of members.

⁸ Breaking of the fast after sundown during Ramadan.

Through the youth group, I was invited to events of significance for the Muslim community, including a huge day-long celebration of the Turkic harvest festival Sabantuy held in Kolmenskoe Park. There, while watching a belt-wrestling (*Kerech*) match, I approached members of a wrestling club from Kyrgyzstan, explained my research and expressed interest in going to their practices. They invited me to train with their club, which I agreed to (having wrestled in high-school). I attended practice three times a week over the span of my last month in Moscow. The ethnic and class character of the belt-wrestling club was starkly different: the members were entirely Kyrgyz and almost all employed in construction or the service industries. Taken together, the *iftar* meals, youth meetings and wrestling practices exposed me to broad repertoires of practices of Muslim self-understanding and responses to Moscow's material and discursive field.

My approach to researching Muslim economic life initially focused on observing construction sites and speaking to workers there, as construction is widely understood to be one of the largest sectors of immigrant employment. Upon realizing the difficulties associated with this method, including my own conspicuous presence, and legal work-related dangers to my prospective respondents, my approach changed. Following advice from my local contacts, I began to spend time in markets, finally deciding to concentrate my observations in four places: the "Moskva" Shopping Center in the working-class Lyublino neighborhood, "Sadovod" Shopping Complex on the Moscow Central Circle highway at the edge of the city, "Dubrovka" in South-Eastern Moscow's Yuzhnoportovoy District, and the "Sebastopol" Hotel complex in the Southern Zyuzino district. My time in markets involved direct observation of social dynamics and short interviews. Interviews in this context took place either outside the markets during

individual break times or in the stores that my subjects worked in or managed, with frequent interruptions due to the highly demanding and past-paced nature of the marketplaces.

In each case, my interviews were conducted in Russian and focused on respondents' feelings of belonging in Moscow and Russian society. Questions also touched on people's interaction with the city space, including questions about settings, such as malls and religious settings. These questions allowed me to gain a broad set of descriptions of people's daily lives. Many of the normative claims made by my respondents allowed me to better understand how members make sense of their place as individuals in the contexts of social marking and collectivity that I observed.

I examine the physical contexts that I encountered using cultural and social geographic "rules" outlined by Winchester et al. (2006). First, I narrate the past of each setting, born out of complex histories of socialist industry, city planning, and capitalist accumulation (in the case of markets) and Soviet/Post-Soviet national and religious policy (in the case of religious spaces). Secondly, I highlight the importance of geographical context, that is, the relation of a space to the whole; be it a concrete whole (geographical Moscow/Russia/Eurasia) or an imagined one (national/religious/ethnic community). The third principle pertinent to my study is that the "absent" or the "silences" present in landscape may be just as salient as that which can be readily observed.

A challenge in this work, or any form of ethnographic or participant observation study, is how I demonstrate myself to be an active participant in the generation and the extraction of my data. The value in assuming the role as a placeless observer has been widely discredited in ethnographic practice. Indeed, any pretense of me as a narrator lacking a race, class, and gender does no justice to my purposes of shedding light on my topic. The social context that I am from,

as well as the way that I was perceived in Russia, as a light-skinned Black man, mediated my conspicuous occupation of spaces as well as my conversations with my various subjects. This became apparent in both my flaneuresque wanderings throughout Moscow as well as my more targeted research moments. For example, my status as a visible member of a minority who has experienced discrimination and harassment both in the United States and Russia may have helped build trust with some of my subjects, with them often having as many questions for me as I had for them. That being said, my unusual appearance (in Russia's context) may have aroused suspicion in other people I encountered. Despite my numerous cases of being stopped by Russian police, assumptions of a parallel experience with my subjects are also not warranted, as my American passport, Visa, and ID card from the prestigious Moscow State University served as buffers that saved me many of the daily anxieties felt by the people I spoke with. The explicit inclusion of my authorial voice, my appearance and my organic conversations with people as someone with a reflexively American understanding of racial and ethnic relations can help showcase the fault lines of my experiences and my own axiomatic assumptions about race.

Structure of the Thesis

The next chapter, Chapter 2, gives a general history of ethnic relations, migration and nationality policy in Russia and the Soviet Union, with a special focus on Moscow. Special attention is also paid to developments in ethnic and religious relations during the height and after the fall of the Soviet Union, as well as the role of urbanization and migration patterns in shaping Soviet subjects. The chapter illustrates that while Soviet authorities sought to cultivate universalist notions of "Sovietness," the exigencies and realities of socialist nation building across a vast cultural landscape created a variegated system of ethnic classification and

governance, where key rights and daily entitlements were affected by one's ethnic status. Broad conceptions of socialist citizenship and national unity were also contradictorily predicated on strict controls of population movements. With the breakup of the Soviet Union, the advent of capitalism and the beginning of mass migration from the former peripheral Soviet republics, new notions of citizenship and collective belonging emerged in Moscow that are deeply affected by broad-based and local historical legacies, capitalist expansion, and the deployment of new forms of identity politics. The chapter ends with current state of migration in Moscow, providing a general outline of ongoing patterns and conflicts.

Chapter 3 gives an overview of the literature on group identity, migration and cities. The first group of literature investigates the factors at play in generating and complicating group identity. This body of work looks at the parameters and practices of belongingness as practiced by hegemonic and grassroots actors in different social locations. It shows the complexity and contradictions inherent in practices of group reification, and the contingency of these practices on relative social positions and structural orders. Theoretical frameworks on the city and urban space are tied into these social processes as actively shaping collective practices in a given social field. These frameworks affirm the importance of urban context in driving mechanisms of migration and belonging and laying out the material stakes embedded in group practice. The chapter contextualizes this thesis in each body of literature and points to how the inscription of group identity and belonging in Moscow does not play out in ways typical of Western European or American cases. It goes on to assert that much current scholarship contains generalizations about migrant groupness, globalization, segregation and subaltern identity that cannot be neatly translated onto the post-Soviet setting.

Chapter 4 focuses on my own spatial and social observations and conversations in migrant commercial spaces. Drawing from academic and news sources to put my photographic, observational and interview data in context, my study will examine the dynamics that surround the different practices of identity in the markets in Moscow. While the economic function of markets provides the chief reason for migrant presence in Moscow, markets take on a variety of social roles that are not purely economic. Observations and interviews show how daily life in the markets is key to the formation of migrant identities and solidarities. Ethnic space is physically inscribed on the market, as migrant presence allows for the existence of economies of scale for migrant publics and collectives. Those collectives are expressed by specialized practices of ethnic and “Muslim” consumption within stores and the huge number of cafes, stands and cafeterias that serve ethnic food. In these spaces of congregation and consumption, The Muslim market users whom I spoke to expressed views that imply these spaces to be comforting and collectively validating. While for migrants, certain spaces in the market function as a retreat from the broader alienating public realm of Moscow, the markets also serve as spaces where Russians encounter and regulate difference. Management and security guards deploy coercive tactics of racialized marking and intimidation to promote forms of formal and informal exploitation. Oppositional migrant collectives sometimes form in response to those tactics, engaging in strikes or conflicts with police or management. Such patterns imply a collective consciousness of shared conditions of exploitation and discrimination on the part of the lowest paid of the markets users.

Chapter 5 continues using ethnography to illustrate how public and private manifestations of religion, civil society and episodic holidays also provide valuable insights into how psychological, spiritual and material needs are met. Drawing from observations of events and meetings during the month of Ramadan, the chapter describes the discourses and practices of

hegemonic and institutionalized Muslim groups that are sanctioned by Russian state power. The discourses and exclusions inherent in those collectives creates the conditions for splintering grassroots collective practices. As a contrast to these hegemonic collectives, groups excluded and alienated by hegemonic institutions form what Nancy Fraser refers to as “counter-publics,” where grassroots Muslim collectives perform their ethnic identities and make sense of their conditions. An example of this form of subaltern group practice is given in observations of a working-class Kyrgyz belt-wrestling club. In that club, collective feeling and action take on forms that reflect the institutional legacies of socialism as well as newer identity-based assertions of collective rights and needs on urban space.

The conclusion contextualizes my general findings and discusses the significance of new Muslim migrant manifestations of “groupness” in Moscow’s post-socialist setting. The general findings on the intricacies of group identity inscription in Moscow are summarized. The limitations of my approach and directions for future study are also discussed. In general, I show how my study demonstrates the mechanisms and belonging as grounded in the everyday conditions of the city itself. I end with an assertion that findings show that my subjects are not simply translocated “ethnic” and irreconcilably “different” peoples. Rather, the diverse range of people whom I encountered are Muscovites, whose identities and social practices are shaped by their daily life in the city.

Chapter 2: Historical Context

Current immigration conditions in Moscow are the product of centuries of sustained interethnic contact and state policy. As part of what Bruce Grant (1995) refers to as a Soviet “century of Perestroikas,” contradictory and overlapping social, national, economic, and ideological policies have shaped the social and material relations of the Russian capital. Moscow is a city whose fate is deeply tied to that of its hinterland: with its Kazanskiy train station serving as its veritable and symbolic “gateway to the East.” Thus, 20th century Moscow developed as the social, administrative and economic center of a vast multinational socialist nation. On the hundredth-year anniversary of the 1917 October Revolution, Moscow embodies the historical forces of post-socialist transition, regional and global economic relations, and Russian nation building. This section will use a general historical profile to ground the analysis of this study in the contradictory dialectic of past and present. This interplay mediates how global and geopolitical trends are grounded in the setting of my study: the genuinely new politics of identity brought about by globalization, the Russian national project and Islam are received and understood through the ideological and institutional legacies of socialism. The chapter will demonstrate how historical legacies help us understand the discourses and mechanisms that shape how group identity is practiced in Moscow’s diverse metropolis.

As Richard Gregory Suny describes, key continuities of Russian imperial ideology predominated in Moscow’s status as the modern center of a project of *mission civilisatrice* in the Soviet Union’s “pre-modern” periphery (Suny 2012). Despite these continuities in imperial form, an explicit, and initially genuine commitment to anti-imperialism in the USSR’s various nationality policies was reflected in the creation of a layered and complex system of national

“homelands” that led to the promotion of contradictory indigenous cultural, linguistic and administrative rights. During this time, restrictions on freedom of movement constrained the nation’s various peoples to officially designated “homelands.” Thus, despite Moscow’s attractiveness for having the best quality of life in the USSR, state policies kept the capital’s population from reflecting the true demography of the vast and diverse Soviet peoples. In this context, nationality became increasingly important to individuals, as something carried around on internal Soviet passports that determined important aspects of everyday life, such as employment and residence. In what Terry Martin describes as an “affirmative action empire,” educated titular nationals in respective republics were integrated into local administration and party apparatuses. Despite Marxist internationalist expectations of a “bringing together” (*sblizhenie*) of the Soviet Peoples, the policies previously outlined had a key role in promoting primordial conceptions of nationalities that shape current trends in nationalism and political belongingness in the Post-Soviet sphere. Such policies continued and exacerbated pre-revolutionary dichotomies of East and West, or “European” and “Asiatic” peoples.

Ironically, many of the constitutive elements of *sblizhenie*, such as the increasing spatial closeness of center and periphery, were perversely accomplished in the present-day capitalist context. After the breakup, political and economic centralization under the Soviet Union was replaced with exacerbated regional inequalities as Moscow further solidified its economic dominance over the former Soviet Union. The demand for exploitable labor has brought millions of people from the now-independent yet impoverished Central Asian republics to a newly constituted Eurasian imperial center. New spatial closeness of center and periphery is coupled with the savage inequalities of the new capitalist system, along with the contradictory legacies of Soviet national incorporation.

How Soviet Policy Constructed Nationality

It is impossible to admit Muslims to the supreme organs of the Communist Party... Because they do not possess any proletarian organization.

F.I. Kolesov, in “*Nasha Gazeta*” (Tashkent) 1917

Every nation, whether large or small, has its own specific qualities and its own peculiarities, which are unique to it and which other nations do not have. These peculiarities form a contribution that each nation makes to the common treasury of world culture, adding to it and enriching it. In this sense all nations, both small and large, are in the same position and each nation is equal to any other nation.

- I. V. Stalin, in “*Sochinenia 3 (XVI)*” 1948

In the period after the October Revolution, the Bolsheviks sought to consolidate their hold on the vast territories of the crumbling Russian Empire. Ideological and *realpolitik* initiatives that explicitly addressed nationality were framed by Bolshevik leaders who implemented those initiatives into the Communist Party’s policy. Aside from Lenin and Stalin, early Bolshevik leaders, as Orthodox Marxists, had not seriously considered the colonial nationalist question. In the party context, “Socialists speaking of Russia thought of St. Petersburg and Moscow... Never of Turkestan or the Volga Tatar region” (Bennington et al. 1979, 8). It was only during the political crises of the Russian Civil War that socialist ideologues were forced to pay substantial attention to the far-reaching regions of the former Russian Empire. It was then that disparate national oppositions to the Bolsheviks emerged, which varied according to local conditions but generally sought independence and greater autonomy from Russian rule. In response to these movements, early nationality policies and ideologies formulated by the

Bolsheviks generally sought to co-opt the language of national self-determination into a socialist framework. For example, in November 1917, partly in response to the ongoing Basmachi rebellion in Central Asia, Lenin and Stalin Issued an, “Appeal to all Muslim Toilers of Russia and the East,” promising to end exploitation within the lands of the former Russian empire, while also asking for Muslims to overthrow their European colonial masters (Benningson et al. 1979, 8). Such early measures, coupled with outright military intervention, sought explicit recognition of cultural difference as a way of diffusing support for the socialist project amongst non-Russian populations. Scholars such as Terry Martin and Yuri Slezkine describe how in the years that followed, nationalism and regional culture played an increasingly significant role in the Revolutionary State’s policy (Martin 2001; Slezkine 1994). Under Lenin’s formulation, non-Russian nationalism was largely a result of rightful distrust (*nedoverie*) towards the “Great Russians.” Lenin elaborated on this in his delineation of “offensive” and “defensive” nationalism, saying that it is necessary to:

distinguish between the nationalism of oppressed nations and the nationalism of oppressor nations... In relation to the second nationalism, in almost all historical practice, we nationals of the large nations are guilty, because of an infinite amount of violence [committed]. (Martin 1979, 7) (*K vosprosu o natsional'nostiakh*)

Russian nationalism in Lenin’s formulation was oppressive, the results of which had stunted the proper historical development of the other peoples of the empire. Lenin asserted that it was necessary to assist the oppressed nationalities of the former Russian Empire to realize their cultural and linguistic consciousness in order to guide them towards an authentic path to socialism. This led to the widespread formation of administrative and cultural organizations that aimed to promote greater indigenous ethnic and linguistic rights: native-language schools, museums, newspapers, and theaters were opened in numerous republic. This set of policies, broadly falling under the label of indigenization (*korenizatsiia*), was dubbed by Terry Martin as

an “Affirmative Action Empire,” a term that shows the centralization of power in what would emerge to be the Soviet Federalist system. Greater cultural autonomy was coupled with economic and political content were dictated by the central party apparatus in Moscow. Both Lenin and Stalin had a highly psychological interpretation of nationalism: the subjective goals of Soviet Power, in Martin’s formulation were conceived to “make Soviet power seem ‘native,’ ‘intimate’ and ‘popular.’” *Korenizatsiia* was thus seen as a way of giving local populations the positive psychological benefits of nationalism and lessen the anxiety of distant rule (Martin 1979, 12).

While there were differences in local implementations, the Soviet nationality policy generally sought to territorialize ethnicity, with officially designated linguistic and cultural “peoples” given sets of rights within newly formed republics and territorial subdivisions. In each territorial context, designated locals were given preference in administrative and party hiring quotas. The most dramatic recipients of policies of affirmative action were territories and ethnicities deemed “culturally backward,” a category seemingly based on territories and ethnicities possessing “undeveloped” levels of capitalist and labor relations. Of the Soviet Union’s large titular nationalities, only the Russians, Ukrainians, Georgians, Armenians, Jews, and Germans were deemed “advanced.”

The difference between “advanced” and “culturally backward” nations, seemingly based on the precepts of scientific socialism, was in fact justified by orientalist assumptions of self and other. This is apparent in the early Bolshevik practice that categorized every single Muslim ethnicity as “backward.” The contradictions of this broad categorization were immediately apparent: the people and nation of Azerbaijan, could not justifiably or empirically be called “pre-capitalist” as prior to the revolution, the oil city of Baku emerged as an industrial powerhouse

with a true-to-Marx native proletariat and bourgeoisie, and a vibrant civil society and print culture that many of the “advanced” nationalities could not yet boast (Alstadt 2016). The designation of cultural-backwardness can thus be conceived as an early example of the Soviet project’s engagement with normative and cultural-racial categories (Zakirov 2015).

Despite such broad discrepancies, the notion of “cultural backwardness” was generally conceived as part of the Soviet mission of developmentalism that, “aimed to dramatically accelerate the modernization of the former Russian Empire, which for Bolshevik leaders meant industrialization, urbanization, secularization, universal literacy, and territorial nationhood” (Martin 2001, 126). Muslim leaders and elites saw value in the allocation of resources that this delineation would afford, and often actively promoted their status as “backward” peoples. As Sultan Galiev, an early Tatar member of the Communist party remarked:

Muslim peoples are not yet divided into antagonistic classes, they do not possess an industrial proletariat. Therefore, a proletarian revolution is impossible in Muslim society, at least for the time being. We must limit ourselves to a ‘Soviet revolution without class struggle (Benningson 1979, 44).

“Soviet revolution without class struggle” solidified the pre-revolutionary status of much of the national elites, recruiting them into party and administrative apparatus; directly replacing Russians who had worked in local clerical and white-collar positions during the Empire. This swift recruitment of educated titular nationals into administrative or pedagogical work, created what Martin calls a “hole in the middle,” where talented titulars struggled to fill the generous quotas left for them at the prestigious technical universities in Moscow and Leningrad. A “critical mass” of educated “Eastern” nationals, with partial exceptions such as the Tatars and Azeris, never developed in their home republics and never filled middle white collar and technical professions, jobs that retained overwhelmingly Slavic workforces throughout the Soviet years (Martin 2001, 180).

Simultaneous to the developing occupational structure in the East, Stalin's nationality policy developed by the 1930s to take forms that promoted primordialist conceptions of ethnicity. This was somewhat contradictory to the intellectual currents that circulated in those times: much early Soviet anthropological work rejected biological racial determinism that was pervasive in Western academic thought at the period, choosing instead an early constructivist approach to ethnicity that was based on Marxist orthodoxy. Party policies that, while being based on Marxist constructivism, differentiated and categorized ethnicities, partially entered broader Soviet discourse at the time, which proved to be less progressive. Such policies may have served to solidify socially essentialized understandings of "peoples" in different historical stages by means of what Nikolay Zakharov terms "popular understanding" of Marxist theory (2015, 79).

In this context, rigorous official debates sought to understand the "essence" of the officially recognized Soviet nationalities (Slezkine 450). It was in this context that words with transcendental, primordialist connotations, such as *ethnos*, entered scholarly vocabulary. Folkloric traditions were encouraged and essentialized as "belonging" to specific peoples. At the same time, the great literary "voices" of each "developed" Soviet people were identified and venerated in their creation of national literary culture. Universal compulsory education programs also served to educate members of specific republics in their "native" tongues. This served to create place-based cultural genealogies that gave official sanction to limited notions of cultural existence. This set of cultural policies shows how Soviet policy sought to be received locally by cultivating loyalty to supranational socialist ideals by filtering them through "correct" ethnic and linguistic traditions.

Starting during Stalin's "great retreat" in the thirties, party cadres and public media developed intense propagandistic and institutional efforts aimed at rehabilitating Russian

national identity. Previously endorsed policies of *korenisatsya* were suddenly reversed and denounced in party platforms and newspaper articles. At the same time, the “Great Russians” were reinstated as the “first among equals” who had overcome the previous “distrust” of other nations through its “immense brotherly help” to other nations during the first years of Socialism. Efforts that identified Russian culture as the common heritage of the diverse Soviet “peoples” were justified for the sake of expediency by Stalin, who noted that, “We have only one language in which all citizens of the USSR can make themselves understood more or less- this is the Russian Language” (Slezkine 458). Russian thus became a mandatory second language in schools and the Russian literary canon was designated as the common Soviet literary culture par excellence.

Enormously popular films in the sixties and seventies such as *Beloye solntse pustyni* (White Sun of the Desert) and *Kavkaskaya plenitsa* (Kidnapping, Caucasian style) portray the civilizing mission of the Soviet project and the ultimate triumph of socialist modernity over “regressive” local cultural practices. Heroes in both movies model Soviet modernity as antithetical to local practices around kinship, violence and gender. The creation of the “Soviet man” (or woman) as an integral aspect of “*Sovietkost*” (Soviet-ness) in speeches, movies and public discourse, was according to Bonnet, “an ethnicized and ethnicizing project” that sought to spread the ‘message of modernity into the ‘backward’ reaches of the Soviet empire” (Bonnet 2002, 26).

After Stalin’s death, these patterns of intense national identity promotion and Russification were scaled back during the Khrushchev thaw and assumed a stagnant mechanical character under Brezhnev. Yet their legacies remained in the simultaneous and unequal forms of nationalism that they cultivated. As Bruce Grant asserts, changing nationality policy in the

Soviet Union caused marginal peoples to experience and negotiate the diverse approaches of a Soviet power that was constantly reimagining itself and its relationship to its marginal subjects (Grant 1995). Grant goes on to insist that those considered marginal to the Soviet imaginary cannot be taken as having been marginally affected by traditional Soviet identity production, as many members saw themselves as integral members of the Soviet project.

Thus, despite unequal distributions of ethnic power and the intentional cultivation of primordialist ethnic identity, scholars such as Richard Grigor Suny assert that historical accounts often underestimate the factors that made the USSR “a cohesive state until its very last years” (Suny 2012, 23). Similarly, Grant stresses understanding the mechanisms and legacies of “Soviet Cultural Construction” where intense cultural work was undertaken by Soviet authorities to create a broad, socialist way of life (Grant 1995; Grant 2012). The intense performativity of those efforts in the face of obvious decline is recounted by Alexei Yurchak’s *Everything was Forever Until It Was No More* (2006), where people went through the celebratory motions of socialism, engaging with its form more than its content. Nonetheless, many people felt (and still feel) intense attachments to the communalist values of socialism. Thus, in Suny’s words, “as current lingering nostalgia demonstrates, people felt differential attachments to the Soviet project”, and the Soviet authorities successfully created “a civic culture that connected persons with broad spaces and great power status” (Suny 2012, 23).

The contradictory connection with a broad physical and imaginary space will be explored in the next section, where the uneven implementation of state policy and the primordial forms of nationalism would have profound effects on conceptions of “homeland” and migratory urbanization patterns for both the USSR’s Muslim peoples and the nation at large. The migratory and homeland patterns delineated in the next section can serve to give the descriptive and

analytical tools to understand the origins and assumptions of the contentious religious, ethnic, and national politics of today.

Migration and Urbanization in the USSR

Understanding the complex factors that influenced migration and demographic trends in the Soviet Union requires an acknowledgement of how policy and collective practices gave differing groups stakes in asserting permanent or temporary claims on space. Rather than offer a comprehensive outline of migratory and urban policy, this short section seeks to demonstrate how policies and grassroots responses translated into demographic trends. This must first be understood as push and pull factors affecting demographic change in the Soviet Union. As Kaiser asserts, the form of ethnic homelands, by their very construction “appear to exert a ‘push’ against nonindigenes” of a given republic (Kaiser 1994, 159). This construction, embodied in a reservation system in employment and management positions for titular nationals, made one’s ethnic status an important factor in determining personal goals in a given republic. The notable exception to this rule was the case of the dominant Russian ethnicity, who despite being at a disadvantage in higher posts in non-Russian republics, filled the “hole in the middle” in many republics by providing a large, mobile and technically educated workforce. Thus, until the nationalist unrest under Mikhail Gorbachev, demographic data shows how ethnic Russians moved around the Soviet Union to occupy mid-level positions in towns and cities throughout the republics (Kaiser 1994).

Conversely, under Stalin much non-Russian movement was due to practices of mass-ethnic deportation. Beyond merely resulting in population movement, scholars such as Golfo

Alexopoulos discuss how Stalinist collective punishment of ethnic and kinship networks helped reinforce notions of “antisovietness” in ethnic terms (2008).

Within persecuted groups themselves, the legacy of Stalin’s policies of forced deportation of certain “antisoviet” ethnicities in 1944, most notably the Crimean Tatars, Ingush, and Chechens, served to make ethnicities hyper-conscious of the concept of a homeland. The self-initiated return of many members of deported ethnicities starting after 1957, after having endured over 13 years of exile, can be interpreted as an example of collective action based on both mass affective and practical ties to one’s homeland. Kaiser asserts that these changes and proclivities for a return to a primordialist homeland shows how emotional attachments to land transcended more “rational-choice models” that seek to explain immigration in a instrumentalist fashion (1994, 187).

While in some cases, grassroots ethnic consciousness of homeland served as a tool of reclamation for victims of Stalinist repression, in heterogeneous regions such as Central Asia and the Caucasus, popular understandings of socialist policy could result in violence. The tendency to tie a “titular” ethnicity to a given piece of land often stimulated violent and regressive patterns in local politics. As Terry Martin elaborates:

By bringing national borders down to the village level the populations natural feelings of ethnic exclusiveness, previously expressed as often in kinship or clan terms, were recast in national terms. Outsiders now had a “home” republic to which they could be expected to return. (Martin 2001, 72)

Thus, feelings of ethnic exclusiveness were justified by official policy that gave institutionalized sanction to xenophobic attitudes in titular groups. A successful push for indigenization in each respective homeland placed those designated as non-indigenes at a distinct disadvantage in allocations of employment and amenities. This occurred even if a given ethnicity was native to a place designated as the “homeland” of another group. This pressured newly designated ethnic

minorities to either emigrate to their officially delineated homelands, or lobby for their region's inclusion into their titular republics. The top-down nature of Soviet governance made the latter option difficult. On the part of Soviet authorities, attempts to account for regional diversity were limited. Sometimes they resulted in what David H. Mould (2016) refers to as "Soviet Gerrymandering" when distant Soviet bureaucrats created winding borders based on assumptions on the "essential natural characteristics" of a given people. This is most apparent in the ethnically-mixed Ferghana Valley, where strange and winding lines establish where the boundaries between the respective Kyrgyz, Uzbek, and Tajik ethnic homelands. The effects of the above-described migratory incentive structure can be seen at the height of the Brezhnev stagnation, the 1970 USSR census indicated that less than one per cent of Central Asians lived outside their designated ethnic territories. Conversely, Russians formed a substantial minority in almost every Soviet republic.

Rapid Soviet industrialization in the East also changed population distribution of many of the Eastern republics, resulting in a steady growth in urbanization in Central Asia. While the populations of the Central Asian cities did grow they did not keep pace with the rocket rates of post-war growth in other regions of the USSR. This was partly due to the Central Asian regional economy being dependent on agricultural activity such as the cotton fields that came to dominate the regional economy of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Cotton gave rural areas a steady amount of labor-intensive low-skilled employment. The larger rural workforce and population distribution in Central Asia was also supported by higher fertility rates relative to other Soviet regions. Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan maintained majorities in the countryside, with rural population percentage shares of 58.8, 55.4 and 69.0 respectively in 1989 (Kaiser 1994, 212). Cities and major towns, as educational and administrative centers, became populated with a

heterogeneous mix of Russians and titulars who were generally surrounded by a sea of rural titular nationals. This general demographic profile endured until the Gorbachev era, when migration out of rural areas accelerated due to crop failures and declining rural standards of living (Kaiser 1994, 164). Labor shortages in Slavic areas undergoing demographic decline in the 1980s also stimulated the first larger streams of voluntary migrations out of Central Asia into the Russian heartlands. In the climate of economic depression in the late eighties, intensified ethnic competition for jobs and resources, as well as a heightened understanding of ethnic difference in cities helped spark much of the ethnic unrest that led to the dissolution of the USSR (Ruble 1989). Episodic unrest, such as riots in Alma-Ata, Kazakhstan, reflect initial how urban space amplifies consciousness of social difference. As such nation-defining processes played out in the provinces, residence in the most attractive cities, such as Moscow and Leningrad, remained out of reach for most Central Asians and Caucasian titular nationals.

MOSCOW

[The Moscow Police] consider that humanity is divided into two parts- that which has already registered to live in Moscow and that which still dreams of doing so.

Fazil Iskander, *Sandro of Chegem* 1983, 311

During the Soviet Union, Moscow served as Russia's showcase to the world. Not only were ambitious (meaning costly and impractical) urban renewal projects carried by Stalin's orders, but in the decades after his death the capital offered a quality of living that was unmatched in other parts of the Soviet Union. The sheer amount of public services and consumer products available made Moscow attractive to migrants from other Soviet regions. Worried about how massive migration might affect the quality of limited services in cities, the Soviet

government formulated migration policy with the express purpose of exerting demographic control over access to privileged urban spaces. Beginning in the 1930's, Moscow was designated a "restricted city" (*rezhimnyi gorod*). This imposed especially strict regulations on access to social services to those "properly employed" in state enterprises. The government sought to limit the right to amenities to those legitimately employed in state enterprises. These strict policies had their embodiment in the *Propiski*, the internal passports carried around by all Soviet citizens designating place of residence and employment (Light 2010).

Postwar housing stock was not sufficient to the rural migrants that continued to crowd communal apartments in Moscow. Nikita Khrushchev's government responded to this housing shortage by initiating massive construction projects using panel-apartment blocks, known as *khrushchevki* after general secretary himself. The cheapness of panel technology made it a hugely utilized technology, and during the sixties the Soviet Union became the world's largest producer of new housing (Varga-Harris 2012). For the first time, the average Soviet family could expect to have their own homes (*svoi dom*), provided to them by the state. In Moscow, the sheer scale of construction outmatched other Soviet cities, further cementing its status as having the best amenities. Public ownership of housing in Moscow during the Soviet Union was key to exercising demographic control on the city, as it allowed rigid control over who could gain residence in Moscow. This housing stock was constantly surveilled by networks of official informants of illegal activity known as *ypravdomy*, who were expected to report unregistered occupants to the authorities. This system did not ensure a complete compliance with legal residence permits, but it did exercise considerable effect in disincentivizing mass unregistered immigration (Light 2010).

During the 1970s, periodic labor shortages in Moscow and other cities had to be addressed by authorities who still sought to safeguard access to the exclusive level of services available in the capital. Thus, authorities under Brezhnev instated a system of temporary residence, not unlike the guest-worker systems in countries like Germany. The workers, known as *limitchiki*, served in the most unappealing labor-intensive jobs on a contractual basis with restricted rights to residence and inferior public services. An estimated 700,000 *limitchiki* were admitted to Moscow under the program until 1991. As Robert Kaiser asserts, such “migration policies were designed to encourage greater geographic mobility towards areas of labor deficit primarily for economic reasons, not to increase international interaction and integration per se” (Kaiser 1994, 165). Their existence in Moscow as street sweepers and on factory floors presented a visible contradiction to universalist rhetoric of equality.

The effects of these policies still did not bring a significant Muslim populations to Moscow, with the Moscow *ummah* dominated by the small and well-integrated Tatar community, who along with the other small Muslim communities, made up only 1.8% of Moscow’s population in 1989 (Toto 2014). Broad and contradictory economic and cultural incorporation of ‘non-Slavic’ peoples would not take place in Moscow until the breakup of the Soviet Union. Rather, the effects of migration restrictions served to solidify non-racial Muscovite notions of self and other: insider and outsider. The privilege associated with living in Moscow created a strong Muscovite identity among many residents of the capital that regards outsiders with suspicion and endures to this day (Vendina 2012). As a legacy of Moscow’s past that continues to influence its present, that privileged identity sees urban space, including housing, as an increasingly prized commodity in an expensive and desirable city.

Moscow's desirability has only grown since the turbulent post-socialist transition in the 1990's. Contrary to expectations, Moscow's political and economic centrality to much of the Post-Soviet world actually deepened as a result of capitalist transition. Moscow found itself at a distinct advantage in relation to other locations in Russia. Superior infrastructure and the sheer concentration of economic and political institutions that were established in Moscow during the Soviet period made the city a logical setting as the central node of capitalist transition and accumulation in the region (Gritsai 1997). Indeed, this economic and political centrality accounts for the fact that the Moscow Oblast is the only Slavic region in Russia that has shown consistent demographic growth since the fall of the Soviet Union, largely because of migration (Ioffe 2011).

The lifting of Soviet-Era migration controls and the city's economic growth as a global and regional financial center has created skyrocketing rental prices. Residential mobility in Russia is low, and many poor and working-class Muscovites, who cannot afford to move elsewhere, remain attached to the former-Soviet apartments that were transferred to them as owners in the nineties. Russia has an exceptionally high owner-occupancy rate of 87.5% as of 2016 (Federal States Statistics Survey, Russia). Despite such a high rate, being a homeowner in Russia does not connote the financial stability and security it does in the American context. Most homeowners in Russia remain impoverished and largely constrained in their mobility as the disposable income necessary for residential movement remains hard to come by. The mortgage market remains extremely underdeveloped and unviable for many Russian. This is coupled with general attitudes that distrust banks and see financial lending practices as morally reprehensible "debt bondage" (Zavisca 2012). A distrust of housing as a commodity is a key legacy of the Soviet social contract, as many Russians who still conceive of housing as a human right (Zavisca

2012). These realities have an important effect on the current ethnic distribution of Moscow: Middle and working-class Russians were not able to leave less desirable neighborhoods en masse, as suburbanizing white Americans did in the post-war years. Russians did not abandon peripheral public housing, as has happened in France and the Netherlands. Rather, these constrained housing markets created conditions where migrants moving to Moscow find housing where they can, and are often forced to live in overcrowded apartments (Reeves 2016). As of this writing, researchers have found little empirical evidence of concentrated racial and ethnic clusters forming in Moscow (Varshaver 2016; Vendina 2002).

The lessening of migration restrictions and the lack of residential segregation has not led to greater integration of migrants. The construction and service sectors, where Central Asian and Caucasian migrants are disproportionately represented, have egregious records of workplace abuses, wage theft and corruption. This precarious lived reality for migrants is dictated by the needs of Moscow's capitalist expansion. As migrants become attracted to nodes of the new post-Fordist "flexible" economy, employers, governments and citizens themselves deploy new methods of social categorization and coercion to control migrant labor (Flynn 2016; Reeves 2015; Sassen 2012). Madeleine Reeves (2015) and Molly Flynn (2016) both describe how issues of legal belonging are inscribed on racialized bodies of Muslim labor migrants from Central Asia. As Reeves' conception of "the feel of law" shows, harassment functions as an informal disciplining mechanism for migrants. Reeves describes labor migrants as "socially tolerated but legally unrecognized" (Reeves 2015, 123).

The Russian state, recognizing the necessity of cheap labor, has been largely complicit by creating legal gray areas in Russia's confusing migration regime: allowing easy-entry into Russia from former Soviet states, while then creating circuitous and expensive visa requirements to

migrants once they are in Russia. Reeves speaks of how the bureaucratic complexity of Russia's migration regime has caused the performativity of the law itself is also often abandoned, with police officers openly asking migrants for bribes. This complexity leads to a spectrum of legality, semi-legality and illegality on individual bases. For those in the grey areas of this spectrum of legality, viability of daily existence in the city is often dictated by access to both intra-ethnic social networks and positive relations with state agents and officials.

Nation-Building in Post-Soviet Russia

Above all we should acknowledge that the collapse of the Soviet Union was a major geopolitical disaster of the century.

Vladimir Putin, 2005

The foundation of sovereign authority in the Russian Federation is its multinational people.

Boris Yeltsin, 1995

After the fall of the Soviet Union, new categories of national construction and social-contracts were needed in each of the successor states. The Russian Federation, considered to be the successor state to the Soviet Union, still held on to a vast swath of its former land which incorporated a territory home to over 186 distinct ethnicities. The constitutive elements of present discourses of Russian nationalism have turned out to be markedly different than those of the Soviet Union. At the same time their general characteristics remain understandable to the generations whose ethnic and national identities were shaped by the Soviet project.

A linguistic note is needed to understand Russia's unique nationalist discourse. The word *Rossiyanin* is an ethnically neutral term denoting civic citizenship and has a strong association with the Russian state and nation and is used in contrast with the ethnically associated word for Russian, *Russkij*. An individual *Rossiyanin* is a citizen of the Russian Federation (*Rossiyskaya Federatsiya*) regardless of ethnicity. The word *Russkij* on the other hand has strong ethnic connotations meaning ethnic Russian people. This distinction and the use of *Rossiyanin* or its adjectival form *Rossiiskii* in administrative practice and political discourse shows that official concepts of belonging in the Russian national project do not simply correspond to Russian ethnicity, although ethnic nationalism has its strength in its grassroots and affective appeal.

While generally seen as being the “ethnic homeland” for Russians (*Russkie*) who were leaving the former Soviet Republics after the collapse, the Russian Federation itself was also conceived in multinational state. As the preamble of the 1993 constitution reads:

We, the multinational people of the Russian Federation (*Rossiskoj Federatsii*), united by a common fate on our land, establishing human rights and freedoms, civic peace and accord, preserving the historically established state unity, proceeding from the universally recognized principles of equality and self-determination of peoples, revering the memory of ancestors who have conveyed to us the love for the Fatherland..

To govern the 186 distinct recognized nationalities that make up the Russian Federation, appeals to Russian (*Russkij*) nationalism would not suffice. The construction of a post-socialist national identity was a contradictory challenge for the Russian political and economic elite, especially in the light of the precarious economic situation that faced the country in the nineties, as well as the tumultuous ethnic movements that sought independence in the Caucasus.

The Russian Federation is divided into eighty-five Federal subjects. Within those eighty-five territorial divisions there are twenty-two republics and nine autonomous okrugs. Both categories receive substantial linguistic and special constitutional rights of self-governance.

These territorial subdivisions in Russia function similarly to the Soviet mode, where distinctly recognized nationalities are given greater linguistic and cultural autonomy within their territorial subdivisions.

Pan-ethnic articulations of nationalism are expressed by rhetoric that assumes cultural commonality as the definition of ‘Russianness’ (Panov 2010). In this narrative of all-Russian cohesiveness, a common heritage and cultural contact has fostered a “Russian way” (*rossiiskiy put’*) amongst those who share distinct cultural commonalities distinct from the West. Boris Dubin notes that, “Russia as the concept can be derived only from the West. It is the ‘secondary phenomenon, which is perceived just through ‘non-belonging’ to the West” (Panov 2010, 92). This oppositional cultural vis-à-vis a constructed “West” is expressed by politicians and Russian scholars as Russia’s unique “collective” culture. In contrast to “Western” notions of liberal individualism, the idea of congregationality (*sobornost’*) is integral to the discourse of Russian nationalism “which claims a priority of collective interests over individual ones” (Panov 2010, 93). The collective interests of the body politic, rather than being up to substantial debate, are presupposed to be already known, self-evident, and unquestionable” (Panov 2010, 93). As Serguei Oushakine notes.

The primacy of collectivity and congregationality, unity of the individual, society, and the state, claimed to be so typical for the Russians, are seen as a product of a particular Eurasian locations, with its specific climate and its extensive landscape. (2010, 168)

Under Putin, who is generally acknowledged to have had substantial control over the Russian State since 2000, nationalist sentiment around a collective mission around a primordialized *duchovnost’* or “spirituality” has been heavily promoted. The creation of “public morality” based around the religious doctrine of religious traditions deemed to be “authentically

native” to Russia, such as the Russian Orthodox Church and the Hanafi Madhhab⁹ that is seen as native to Tatarstan. References to the moral legitimacy of specific religious traditions are used in a narrative of return to authentic “Russian” principles in a time of widespread perceived moral degradation brought by Western culture (Zigon 2010). Basing Russian identity in religious terms may seem untenable in the wake of seventy-four years of state-sponsored atheism, where 61% of the population defined itself as non-religious in 1991. Yet since then, statistics on religious identification have changed dramatically. In 2014 over 73% of Russians now self-identify as affiliated with the Orthodox church. Regular church attendance has not risen significantly, from 2% to 7% in that same timeframe (Pew Research Center 2014). This uptick in religiosity and its contradiction with actual practice most likely signifies a desire among individuals to self-identify more with institutions that validate new conceptions of Russian tradition and identity. The role of religion, rather than denoting individualized religiosity may serve the of an instrumentalist category of collective belonging. Thus, religiosity may in fact function as an essential trait of hegemonic Russian nationalist construction, much like essentialized ethnic markers that characterized multicultural politics in the Soviet Union.

This articulation of religion as national identity and public morality is essential to understanding the reality and the contradictions of the articulations of “other” in Russian public dialogue. As Serguei Oukashine notes, the fall of the Soviet Union was widely perceived as a time of national embarrassment and moral degradation (Oushakine 2009; 2010). Responses to such degradation vary, from official and middle-class efforts to “catch Russia up” with the West, to official engagements with politics of resentment and the universalized distrust felt by many working-class Russians (Kangas 2013).

⁹ Madhhab; lit.: “way to act.” Refers to a school of Islamic law or *fiqh*. The Hanafi school is one of the four major schools of thought in Islam, and is geographically associated with Central and South Asia, Turkey, the Levant, and Egypt.

Many people, including Russian anthropologists, interpreted national degradation in ethnic terms. Such discourses circulated in the form of ideas of an ethnic Russian *ethnos*, as expressed in concrete territorial and essentialized forms. The success of a particular *ethnos* relies on the correct territorial and political positioning of a *ethnos* vis-a-vis other *ethnoses*. In this formulation, certain ethnoses represent, according to Oushakine, the “inability to restrain the circulation of (unwanted) ethnoses, within a traditional ethnic milieu raises a question about control over property and power that Russians lost” (Oushakine 2009, 166). Such xenophobic explanations are often employed by Russians to make sense of the coincidence of perceived national embarrassment with increased migration, Muslim assertiveness and encounters with difference. The rising popularity of such ultra-nationalist slogans as “Russia for (ethnic) Russians” (*rossiya dlya russkikh*) and racialist attempts to control Russian space, such as the 2013 riots in Moscow’s Biryulovo district, demonstrate the rising pervasiveness of such extreme interpretations. The Moscow authorities have shown ‘semi-disapproval’ of nationalist marches and ethnic Russian riots, while taking increasingly strict measures against immigrants.

Islam and the Russian State

Scholars point to numerous conflicts with Muslim peoples and Russia’s physical proximity to Islamic empires as forces that have situated Islam as a clear other that Slavic Russia has often defined itself against but remains inexorably connected to. Recognizing the contentious region of the Caucasus as a visible setting of Muslim instability and “terrorism,” as well as the proliferation of national movements based on the premise of setting up Islamic states in the region, Russian political leaders have been quick to incorporate Islam into Russia’s national

identity. Putin in particular has been adamant in stating that Islam has always been a part of Russian culture: most famously saying that the Eastern Orthodox Church is closer to Islam than it is to the Catholic Church (Hunter 2004). To manage Muslim demographic growth in both Moscow (where members of Muslim ethnicities account for an estimated 14% of the city's population as of 2014) and the Caucasus, Muslim political leaders have been picked and designated as "official" delegates of the faith in circles of power. The most prominent Muslim leader favorable to Putin is Chechnyan president Ramzan Kadyrov, the son of a rebel-turncoat leader Akhmat Kadyrov. Though recently fissures between them have emerged regarding the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar, Kadyrov and Putin both seek to project a "Russian model" of Islam and Muslim incorporation to the world.

The Kremlin has been intentional about the model it projects onto the world, and Moscow's built environment remains crucial to that performance. For example, in response to shortages in worshipping space due to the exponential growth of the capital's Muslim population, Moscow's largest Mosque, the old Cathedral Mosque (*Sobornyi Mechet*) on Prospekt Mira, was demolished by authorities in 2011 with plans of expansion. The new building, a massive 10,000 capacity complex that cost upwards of \$170 Million USD to construct, was opened in 2015. Much of the funding of the Mosque came from Dagestani billionaire Suleyman Karimov, who was subsequently arrested in France on charges of tax evasion in November 2017. The opening ceremony for the Mosque was a massive international event featuring president Putin and dignitaries from twenty-three Muslim countries, including Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas. Despite such grand and highly-publicized gestures of incorporation, the city still suffers periodic overcrowding on Muslim holidays such as the previously described holiday of Eid.

Rather than allow for new Mosque construction, the Russian state's methods of Muslim management are based on delegating legitimacy to a set of hand-picked leaders who exercise strict control over existing spaces of worship. Those leaders are overwhelmingly members of the socially-integrated Tatar ethnicity native to the oil-rich and stable Tatarstan region of Russia. As both the chair of the Council of Muftis (SMR) and the head of the Moscow-based Spiritual Administration of Muslims of European Russia (DUMER), Tatar Mufti Ravil Gainutdin is generally considered the officially designated "spiritual leader" of Muslims in Russia. According to Luke March, Putin and other officials prefer Gainutdin's Moscow location, which gives him access to high-level positions and foreign contacts not available to the competing Central Spiritual Administration (TsDUM) in Ufa, Bashkortostan (March 2010). The legacies of the Soviet state are apparent in this power arrangement in two ways: the first is the neo-Soviet geographic centralization of administration in Moscow, while the second legacy relates to how religion is used by the government as an essentialized marker of ethno-cultural identity. Enduring Tatar control of Moscow-based religious institutions is significantly motivated by a desire to keep their cultural dominance on the expression of Islam in Moscow. This cultural dominance was not put into question until recent widespread immigration into Moscow has reduced Tatars to a minority of Moscow's Muslims. As of 2012, Central Asians and Caucasians are estimated to make up 70 per cent of the capital's *ummah* (March 2010, 93). Despite the enduring Tatar grip on institutional power, Mosque leadership have had to adapt: the use of Tatar language in Mosques and services has rapidly eroded, as Russian becomes the *lingua franca* of dialogue in Moscow's diverse *ummah* (Oparin and Safarov 2014).

The ossification of sanctioned Tatar power thus denies the rights of recognition to those who now make up the majority of Moscow's Muslim population. As journalist Fatima Ezhova argues:

Ruling circles with the help of certain 'sponsor' structures try to control the Russian ummah, to suppress the grass-roots structures, which, as is said in the Qur'an, might compete with one another in beneficence. This [competition] occurs in London, where... there are many more Mosques than in Moscow. (March 2010, 90)

Grassroots expressions of faith and practice are viewed with suspicion in circles of power, and the hierarchical and inflexible nature of Moscow's religious institutions halts the horizontal integration of religious and civil societies that are not specifically sanctioned by the state. The accommodationist posture of official channels and ambivalent official responses to Muslim lobbying have kept the total number of sanctioned Mosques in Moscow at four. An unknown number of other unsanctioned and illegal institutions also serve the needs of the estimated 1.5 million Muslims in the capital. To put that in perspective, Moscow has over six hundred Orthodox churches and seven synagogues, although Jews comprise less than one per cent of the population (March 2010, 89). The precarious legality of many Muslim migrants may keep them from publicly vocalizing discontent with this arrangement, due to their visibility and need to keep a "low profile."

Under this paradigm of nepotistic incorporation into sanctioned religious hierarchy, the state grants cultural legitimacy to a limited number of interpretations of Islam. Central Asian forms of sufi *dhikr* or practice are frowned upon as too loud or disruptive by the Tatar elites in charge of the Mosques (Oparin 2017). Often publicly Islamic practices, such as wearing a long beard or the age-old practice of public animal sacrifice during the *Eid* festival, are frowned upon in official conceptions of Islam (Crews 2014). These strict parameters of acceptability create a contradictory relationship of acceptance in words and marginalization in practice that

characterizes the lives of many of Russia's migrant and native Muslims. In this context of the resurgence of nationalism, Muslims in Russia, particularly immigrants in Russia, receive greater public scrutiny and repression for visible otherness, despite an official dialogue of tolerance.

In public dialogue, migrant groups are often seen as potential extremists and unwelcome aliens. Because of patterns of terrorism that are framed racially by the Russian media, Russian public opinion on Muslims migrants is cold. 60% of Russians believe migrants have a problem of extremism, and though rare, violent acts committed by migrants are highlighted by the media as part of what is perceived as a pervasive problem (Levada Center 2014). This attitude of fear and suspicion towards migrants has led to the proliferation of violent hate crimes, not only towards Muslims but all those with recognizable "non-Slavic" features (*litsa neslavvyanskoj vneshnosti*). For example, in 2007, The SOVA Center, a Moscow based NGO that monitors xenophobic attacks, recorded 632 hate crimes in Moscow, resulting in 67 deaths. During that same time, only 27 convictions for hate crimes were handed out (Kozhevnikova et al. 2008). Though the government explicitly condemns xenophobic riots and acts of violence, efforts to curb ethnic violence perpetrated by Russians has been halfhearted at best. The government's and security forces disposition has been one of periodic engagement and opportunistic alignment. That means that politicians have condemned explicit racism, while engaging in discourse that associates migrants with national social and security problems. Such discourse such as that by Mayor Sobyanin in Moscow and President Medvedev lends credence to the attitudes causing Russian ethnic violence, positioning migrants as a dangerous "other." The police is even more inconsistent, breaking up xenophobic riots like those in Manezhnaya square and Biruyovo in 2010 and 2011 respectively, while also conducting mass roundups and "random" checks on racialized migrants. As is shown in Chapter 4, xenophobia plays into the variety of formal and

informal mechanisms used by the state and private actors to psychologically and physically police migrants.

Making Sense of Past and Present

This chapter has laid a broad overview outlining the contradictory past and present dynamics affecting migrant life in Moscow. These histories have affected the lives of migrants in Moscow in many ways: as we have seen, Soviet policies on nationality and migration have created the institutional and ideological legacies that actors engage with in Moscow. Today, government figures frames current priorities of national identity and minority incorporation in language that is recognizable to those whose frames of reference engage the Soviet past. Economic incentives have created the conditions for Muslim migrant presence in Moscow, while ideological and institutional legacies of the Soviet project affect their cold reception in Moscow. These legacies also provide the discursive and ideological tools that are available to migrants to frame their everyday lives in the city and their claims to group identity and belonging in Moscow. The theoretical frameworks to further make sense of how history, social-structure and daily life interact in Moscow are elaborated on in the next chapter, which discusses scholarship on group identity and belongingness, and migration and the city.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Context

Group Identity and the Mechanisms of Belonging

A theoretical overview of belongingness and group identity is crucial to grapple with the complex realities of Muslim migrant existence in post-socialist Moscow. These conversations delve into how naturalized assumptions of inclusion and group cohesion are produced. My findings point to how “common sense” assumptions of group boundaries and cohesion operate in a contradictory manner: on the one hand, the individuals and institutions that I encountered operate under assumptions of collective moral, spiritual and behavioral attributes that set different groups apart. On the other hand, the same individuals and institutions who view categories such as, “Muslim” or “Tajik” or “Kyrgyz” as groups with solid boundaries and constitutive elements, nonetheless perform considerable labor to produce and perform those identities to fit their changing needs and the claims of belongingness that they wish to make. Thus, “identity entrepreneurs” seek to change the conditions of their incorporation into existing groups, or break off entirely, seeking more adequate representation in collectives representing smaller subsets of their identities.

Thus, as historical and locational conditions change, so do the set of elements that make up a given identity entangled in those conditions. The particularly dramatic shift in power and group relations brought on by the fall of the Soviet Union provides a point of reference for Muslim migrants who are excluded from current forms of citizenship in Moscow and Russia at large: namely, that social exclusion as practiced right now is not *natural*. This is because prior to the breakup, Russians and migrants were the *legal* citizens of the same nation-state, despite being entitled to different ideological and physical realms of belonging within that state. In the current

context, post-socialist memories of “universal” citizenship interact with solidified group boundaries to govern the discursive field used by Muslim migrants to make claims of belongingness. Conversely, socialist ideological histories, (and a selective amnesia of a past of shared citizenship) also govern how authorities and Russians regulate Muslim presence in the capital and exclude migrants from citizenship. This section explores and evaluates conceptual frameworks to identify the practices through which differently positioned actors make sense of and contest their place, vis-à-vis others in localized social conditions.

Naming the existence of “common sense” frames of “primordial” group identity does not mean replicating their essentialist tenets (Bocharov 2012; Brubaker 2002). In the context of my study, understanding discursive and categorical deployments of various ethnicities and groups such as “Tajiks”, “Muslims” or “migrants” does not mean conceiving their groupness as a given essentialized formation. Acknowledging their “realness” as social conceptions does not necessarily denote “buying into” their deployment as singularly cohesive entities with unproblematic borders. Group formation thus needs to be conceived as political, social, economic *processes* that create conceptions of group ‘reification’ that are unstable, overlapping and incomplete.

Constructivist arguments place notions of group identity as internalized “institutions” where repeated “sedimented” actions gain collective significance beyond their original intention. (Berger and Luckmann 1967) In this conception, identity does not originate within individuals but rather is produced in the social realm. Thus, socially constructed group boundaries are internalized by their bearers as “natural” categorizations and bonds. While providing an important point of departure, the constructivist framework may over-stress the layered, social nature of categories and bonds, while underemphasizing human biology (including intrinsic

social needs) as well as the effects of changing productive forces and power relations. Constructivist scholars have also emphasized continuity and layering at the expense of explorations of ruptures and discontinuities: the material and social processes at work that disrupt previous categories seen as natural and “naturalize” new categories of belongingness. This is an especially pertinent to the Post-Soviet case, where a sudden rupture of an internationalist state and post-socialist nation-building necessitated a large shift in conceptions of groupness and nationhood.

Benedict Anderson’s book, *Imagined Communities*, though focused solely on nationalism, also provides an important framework for understanding the elements used to construct and justify other group bonds. This is due to Anderson’s defining nationalism as distinct from other “isms” and closer to religious and kinship. The imagined “bonds” used by actors to construct nationalism are described by Benedict Anderson as the collective “feeling” inherent among those who share of immutable and seemingly natural, un-chosen ties. In this conception “nation-ness is assimilated to skin-color, gender, parentage and birth-era - all those things that one cannot help (Anderson 2006, 139) Anderson defends nationalism from claims (mostly from Marxist or progressive scholars) of its inherent basis in utilitarian ends or in racism and exclusion, rather arguing that nationalism has its dimension in love that “expressed by in the vocabulary of kinship and of home” (2006, 149).

Many other scholars have followed this affective analytic trail by defining reified groupness as a “logic of emotions.” (Bassin and Kelly 2012, 18) By cultivating and deploying affective ties of an extended, imagined somatic family immutably tied to land, ethno-national projects gain legitimacy by offering cultural citizenship to those who fit essentialized criteria of homeland culture. (Oushakine 2010) This conception of the state, as vitally connected to the

family and land is described by John Gledhill as coinciding with Michel Foucault's description of the rise of "biopower." Foucault argues of a shift of an understanding of power during the 18th century "from pre-modern control over the ending of life to a modern mode in which power is expressed through control over the production of life" (Gledhill 2005, 205). This shift took the form of a rhetorical expansion of the infinitesimal aspect of communal living, the family, to encompass national community. These conceptions of nationhood as connected to the supposed inherent characteristics of their people are integral to how processes of community construction provide people with "appropriate notions, reasonable categorizations, cognitive schemes, narratives and myths" (Panov 2010, 87). The limited set of traits used by dominant forces to construct conceptions of a normative national "people" demonstrate how, in Stephen Castles conception, "minority formation and racialization are inextricably linked with the fundamental characteristics of the nation state" (Castels 2000, 54). Even in political contexts that profess universalized civic citizenship, hegemonic discourses often place certain groups outside of the scope of national belonging when they are viewed as collectively "failing" to live up to national civic values. Such rhetoric can function to create what Giorgio Agamben calls a "state of exception", where members of a stigmatized group are not extended seemingly "universal" rights of equality (2005).

The studies of rupture and continuity in the Soviet and post-Soviet case point to how socialist understandings of groups occupying states of inclusion and "states of exception" become transplanted and racialized in the post-Soviet context. Indeed, while many of the preceding theoretical generalizations are apparent in post-socialist contexts, the interaction of the remnants of socialist ideological and institutional frameworks with capitalist processes creates key differences that theoretical generalizations tend to gloss over. Approaches such as those by

Nikolay Zakharov (2015), Terry Martin (2001) and Yuri Slezkine (1994) illustrate the contradictory legacies of specific practices of Soviet governance where group identity was cultivated “from above” to create politicized forms of ethnic categories that were embedded in everyday localized relations of power. Ethnic-based affirmative action programs and codified ethnic ties to specific territories predominated through much of Soviet history: every Soviet citizen had an “ethnic identity” written in their passports that put them in relative advantages or disadvantages in different contexts. Such practices figure into what Michel Foucault calls “governmentality.” The discursive toolkits used in top-down practices of “governmentality” to carve out conceptions of groupness involve the deployment of locally and historically-rooted socio-cognitive mechanisms that allow for the reproduction of group identities that subjects can reflexively identify with so that they can be governed more effectively. The embeddedness of group identity in relations of power is asserted by those in the Marxist tradition. They note that the tools that subjects use to make sense of their place in society involve a set of interpretations that are embedded in objective relations of power and class (Althusser 1971; Gramsci 1970). Indeed, Pierre Bourdieu asserts how hyper-local “fields” emerge in broader contexts of power (1984). “Field” is used to refer to the social arena where subjects make claims and compete for resources by assuming forms of expected “habitus,” the embodied set of dispositions of subjects that reflect one’s identity. Within one’s social field, the differential expectations tied to “habitus” allow subjects to claim access to different forms of capital. Bourdieu’s frames of field and habitus are valuable in understanding how objective relations of power and social milieu shape subjective dispositions that become unquestioned social “truths” and constitutive elements of essentialized group identities.

A further body of analysis of group identity investigates its reproduction at the grassroots level. Broadly, this body of work focuses on how group identity and nationalism are created in everyday collective practice. Such work dates to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who wrote in his *Discourse on Political Economy* in 1757 about patriotism as “spontaneous” and “deliberate will in which individuals aggregate and become part of an identifiable people” (Glenhill 2005, 204). Broad-based emotional connections based on kinship and shared bonds figure into Rinold Grigor Suny’s description of nations as ‘affective communities.’ Suny asserts that “national identification is not only with people with whom one has common interests but with whom one feels a special bond... Distinct from the feelings one has towards those of other nations” (Suny 2012) While affect is an essential attribute that is deployed and produced continually in narratives of groupness and nationhood, a focus on the seemingly irrational aspects of “bonds” and “kinship” lose sight of the embeddedness of nationhood in relations of power and interest exercised in the social arena. Conversely, Floya Anthias argues that these imagined boundaries “involve important affective dimensions of social bonds and ties,” that are solidified, “through *practices and experiences* of social inclusion” where a “stake and acceptance in a society is created and maintained” (Anthias 2006, 21).

The post-socialist transition points to a case where everyday life changed and past practices of social inclusion were no longer sustainable. The dramatic reconfiguration of collective identities since the Soviet collapse of the early nineties necessitates analytical approaches that describe how people in post-socialist societies create new subjectivities, engage in unique practices and come to understand their changing social and physical landscapes (Stryker and Patino 2001). Many scholars have noted the effects of the turbulence of the post-socialist transition on everyday discourse. For example, Serguei Oushakine notes the prominence

of narratives of shared pain and trauma in post-socialist Russia being simultaneous to the emergence of hard-line nationalist discourses (2009; 2010). Olga Shevchenko's studies in post-socialist Moscow highlight what she terms, the "crisis of the everyday" where people formulate meanings and discourses around a pervasive feeling of collective uncertainty and a normalized constant sense of crisis (2009). Both Oushakine and Shevchenko note how collective feelings of nostalgia some people have for the Soviet project function as an idealized retreat from current insecurities of capitalism and inequality. The contradictory ways that many post-socialist citizens view the past underscores how the socialist project has become entangled in people's sense of self identity. Bruce Grant (1995) illustrates this in his ethnography of the Nivkhi people on Sakhalin island, demonstrating how even those on the peripheries of the socialist project may idealize aspects of the Soviet past when confronted with present uncertainties and global connections.

Beyond intellectual frameworks that emphasize either top-down or grassroots mechanisms on how intra-group cohesion and cognitive schemes are created and preserved, this study also engages how "micropolitical" practices of identity complicate subjects' notions of groupness and self. This approach observes the ways in which agents who are categorized internalize, change, appropriate, or subvert the categories that are imposed on them (Dominguez 1987). This intense process of identity negotiation takes place in the realm of everyday life, as the innumerable social, economic and political choices of individuals. Michel de Certeau's notion of "transversality" notes how ground-level actors negotiate and subvert "synoptic" regimes of power in daily life (1987). This is indeed the case in Moscow, as differentially-situated actors negotiate their place in society through practices both within and outside of dominant frames of belonging.

As situationists like De Certeau may overemphasize the subversive qualities of everyday life, other formulations note how everyday life involves the circulation of “taken for granted” truths of common sense needed for the maintenance of the social order, often with little evidence of their veracity (Garfinkle 1967). The production of such everyday knowledge thus incorporates diverse conceptions and activities involving the “reproduction of habitual cultural patterns” and “their reinterpretation in response to novel social conditions” (Shevchenko 2009, 6) This reinterpretation of habitual cultural practices of “common sense” and self-identity is especially pertinent to the post-socialist context, where people must make sense of their places in dramatically changed social conditions with both the old and new discursive tools at their disposal.

Intersectional frameworks provide a breadth of literature that help to understand the reception and complication of identity by groups occupying differential social positions. At times, intersectional thought appears overly relativistic in assigning equal causal power to all given identity categories in generating forms of subjectivity at the expense of objective relations of power and capital. That being said, the insights of intersectional frameworks can be useful in examining the ways in which differential identities play out in daily life to influence how people of different social positions live and conceive of their place in collectivities that are presented to the outside world as cohesive and unproblematic. As Nira Yuval-Davis argues,

The different situated imaginations that construct these national imagined communities with different boundaries depend on people’s social locations, people’s experiences and definitions of self, but even more importantly on their values (2006, 204).

When applied to political-projects, Yuval-Davis’ situated imaginations and boundaries have concrete manifestations in their creation of “different levels of belonging: social locations, identities and ethical and political values,” which in turn, “can become the requisites of

belonging.” (Yuval-Davis 2006, 204) Notions of “good-citizenship” or validated belonging to any kind of “moral community” are often contingent on embodying a set of normative values. The parameters of such values are often constructed in opposition to an excluded and stigmatized “other” whose perceived nature or behavior is constructed as incompatible with the naturalized “traits” of a given community (Babst 2011; Fraser and Gordon 2006; Goffman 1986). As thinkers in the feminist tradition such as Vikki Bell (1999) and Judith Butler (1990) argue, the social and economic capital tied to political projects of belonging can affect how a people both inside and outside of that scope of belonging “perform” to be included or differentiate themselves from a collective. Those performances can be daily embodiments of normative behavior seen as “positive” such as hard work, productive citizenship or “family values.”

Along these lines, the idea of a “public” can also be conceived as “the performative enactment of collective subjectivity, split between multiple voicings” (Yeh 2012, 717). In contrast to conceptions of anonymity within an idealized bourgeois “public sphere” the performative aspect of identity is central the deployment and splintering of publics (Fraser 1990; Habermas 1962; Sennett 2008). As shown in subsequent chapters, this was the case with the institutionalized Muslim religious organizations in my study, whose members seek to engage a dominant “public” by embodying a “respectable” and moral collective identity in order to claim inclusion in Russian society. Conversely, performances of group identity can also be contentious and serve as a fundamental tool of constructing an oppositional identity. This is the case among members of the Kyrgyz sports association that I observed, whose “counter-public” embodies idealized ethnic forms of masculinity but asserts a collective claim to ethnic pride and self-defense in the face of institutional exclusion.

Episodic events of group activity can be examples of the performative aspects of belonging. Such events, such as holidays, marches and even riots can illustrate identity assertions or racialized aspirations of groupness. Both Michael Hechter (1975) and Brubaker (2004) see the importance of the event in group solidarity. Indeed, Brubaker views “groupness” itself as an event and collective solidarity as a lasting event. For example, the previously described collective actions during Eid demonstrate a moment where a repressed group felt encouraged by its numbers and asserted its belonging in public space. Conversely, race riots by dominant groups, such as the Russian ethno-nationalist demonstrations in that occurred Moscow in 2011 and 2013, can be characterized as acts of public and self-conscious “whiteness” that assert oppositional group identity vis-a-vis “black” immigrants (Roediger 1991; Zakharov 2015). This is a valuable concept in light of the Michael Omi and Howard Winant’s sociological notion of “racial formation” as a process of social construction through grassroots intellectual engagements with economic, social and political institutions that practice social exclusion (1994). Indeed, as my study will demonstrate instances where both migrants and Russians have taken collective “racial” frames to understanding their conditions and social locations in relation to each other.

As we have seen, the parameters and expressions of belongingness require considerable amounts of labor to naturalize. That labor is undertaken by both hegemonic and grassroots social actors. Inherent in any project of belongingness is the emergence of contradictions that problematize to the inner cohesiveness and boundaries of any group. Those contradictions play out in everyday life, where people make sense of, contest and reinvent their identities with the tools of their social and material milieu. Dynamics of movement and place are integral to understanding the terms with which people seek to create cohesive interest groups to lay claims

on scarce social and material resources. This brings us to our second scholarly conversation: how the social processes outlined above are grounded in place and the dynamics of the city.

Cities and Global Migration

This study deals with how patterns of group practice that affect Muslim migrants in Moscow are embedded in the local context. That context is tied to both regional and global patterns of shifting economic, political and social relations. Beyond a narrow focus on my target population, this research seeks to use the parameters of religion, ethnicity and migration to also make an intervention into the nature of subaltern group identity in the city of Moscow itself. Too often, theorists on migration lose focus on setting as a space where broader dynamics and existing identities are changed and constituted (Glick Shiller and Caglar 2009). Scholars of both cities and migration often favor comparative generalizations, rather than examinations of the historical, social and cultural specificity of different settings that determine patterns of immigrant incorporation. Concentrating on how globalization and migration is received in different contexts often yields the richest theoretical results. Thus, Moscow's status as a central node in a global and regional network of economic, cultural and political power is a central point of analysis in my study (Favell 2006).

As James Holston and Arjun Appadurai note, place is fundamental in concretizing issues of membership in society (1999). By their sheer scale of activity, cities account for the greatest concentration of human social, cultural and productive capacity. The contradictions of scarcity and abundance that at once characterize the metropolis generate the basis of these intensive social claims and contestations. Theorists have pointed out that the city is not a uniform space. Indeed, it is the nature of market societies to segregate and differentiate urban spaces for a

specialization of purposes (Lefebvre 2003 (1970)). This study seeks to understand the mechanisms through which specific spaces are inscribed with differential social significance in Moscow's post-socialist context.

Throughout my study, I was nagged with questions relating to the central theme of spatial assertion and symbolism: how does an abandoned Orthodox church become a site of Kyrgyz masculinity three times a week? How do markets function as spaces of Muslim presence, work and consumption, while also allowing for Muslims' racial categorization and exploitation? Explorations of these questions involve explanatory frameworks on how socio-historical patterns become layered onto specific spaces, tying dynamics of migration and globalization to inscriptions and contestations of identity in specific spaces. The nature of these spatial assertions is deeply embedded in global historical processes that shape the physicality of the city and the power relations within it.

First in our discussion of the city it is necessary to define the scope and social significance of space itself. In his seminal work, *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre defines three broad socio-cognitive processes that overlap to help create the socially-produced significance of space; "conceived space" is the projected physicality, significance and purpose ascribed to space by the dominant forces of a society, the architects, planners, politicians et cetera. The next form, "perceived space" denotes how societies and individuals project meaning onto an existing space. The last form, "lived space" is the everyday experience of people using and navigating a physical space, a social process that is simultaneously real and imagined (Lefebvre 1992). This dialectic demonstrates that space is simultaneously objective, imagined and lived. In the social sphere, differently positioned actors seek to assert their interests and interpretations on a given space. Continuing under this framework allows us to understand how

social processes and affective projections interact with objective and imagined spaces. To further bring this into the context of this research, it is necessary to look at the confluence of lived and representational space in the material setting of the city, as well as the interaction of space with patterns of globalization and the market.

Cities are not just passive settings of history. Rather, their real and imagined spaces exert influence on subjects and are arenas of constant conflict on the question of whom they are for. This dialectic of projected social meaning onto space was prevalent in my study. In each of the places where I conducted my research, different groups sought to assert their meanings, aspirations and anxieties onto shared spaces. As is shown in subsequent chapters, hegemonic preconceptions in Russian society of certain “migrant” markets being spaces of chaos and illegality have material ramifications as the state and market administrations seek to discipline and categorize the market’s users. At the same time, the numeric every-day concentration of Muslims in certain markets allows for the formation of spaces of comfort and regroupment, where migrants socialize and make sense of their places in their workplaces and society at large. At moments, the emancipatory possibilities of the markets become apparent in the instances when migrant workers engage in collective actions of solidarity to contest their exploitation and categorization.

Bringing the city into the present historical moment necessitates an engagement with the effects of current global economic and social patterns. There is a scholarly consensus that we are living in an age of enhanced globalization and migration (though the normative frameworks of this order are being increasingly questioned in national discourses). Globalization is generally defined as the broad set of dynamics where an increasingly ubiquitous set of information, commodity, and labor migration flows permeate and connect different locations on an

unprecedented scale (Anthias 2006; Blum 2007; Sassen 1988). Stephen Castles notes that “globalization erodes the autonomy of the nation-state, undermines the ideology of distinct and relatively autonomous cultures, and causes the increasing mobilities of people across borders” (Castels 2000, ix). In this context of change and population movements, Stuart Hall discusses what he terms “the multicultural question” that is produced by globalization.

What are the terms for groups of people from different cultural, religious, linguistic, historical backgrounds, who have applied to occupy the same social space, whether that is a city or a nation or a region, to live with one another without either one group [the less powerful group] having to become the imitative version of the dominant one- i.e. an assimilationism- or, on the other hand, the two groups hating one another, or projecting images of degradation? In other words, how can people live together in difference? (Hall 2000, 209)

The market, labor and information flows inherent to globalization create the conditions where societies must grapple with new questions of diversity and difference. Confronted with growing ethnic and religious diversity, sub-national identity groups are now competing more successfully for individuals’ time and attention. Many scholars note that these forms of identity politics are divisive in that they “tend to disrupt established ideologies of civic unity and moral solidarity in ways that often make people angry and anxious” (Holston and Appadurai 1999, 9). Manuel Castells goes further, characterizing current the current “network society” as one where feelings of identity have been redeployed away from traditional nation-states to align with defensive identity communities (Castells 2009). This retreat into identity communities takes the forms of acts of resistance against what people see as homogenizing cultural and economic forces. Thus, as Stephen Castles notes, “the defense of local or sectional interests against globalizing forces may be based on cultural symbols connected with dignity and identity” (2000, 6). Fitting the localized politics of identity in migrant Moscow in these terms is difficult. The enduring existence of the differential regional and ethnic identities cultivated during the Soviet Union do

not necessarily represent a “new” clean break from the past. Rather, political and grassroots actors have redeployed familiar identities into frameworks that seek to address the current and local concerns of differentially positioned social groups. “Resistance” to globalization in the Russian context occurs both in hegemonic discourses and policies of dominant political actors as well as in grassroots practice of migrants on the front line of Moscow’s encounter with global commercial and labor flows. Thus, current mobilizations of identity have functioned both to generate mechanisms of exclusion while allowing for new discursive and practical tools to lay claims on the material and symbolic spaces of the city.

In contexts of social exclusion, scholars such as Floya Anthias speak of belonging as a relationship between place and what subjects perceive as more “transcendental” identities (Anthias 2006). Rather than assigning inherent characteristics of belonging to specific groups, Anthias argues for a study of “translocational positionalities” to understand the discursive process and material outcomes of diasporic identity when contextualized to social positions and physical locations. Going further, she writes that “a sense of collective identity and a feeling of belonging to the country in which you reside in are neither necessarily coterminous nor mutually exclusive.” (2006, 19) This points to the psychological complexity of the migrant experience of belonging, especially when tied to spaces of presence where powerful interests and everyday interactions systematically exclude migrants from dominant conceptions of belonging.

James Holston and Arjun Appadurai describe how these processes can lead to instances of “transnationalization,” as, “Neither non or post nationals neither feels much loyalty to the place in which they are perhaps only temporary transplants.. instead they are likely to retain primary loyalty - at least in cultural terms - to diasporic identities” (Holston and Appadurai 1999, ix). Such assumptions about “primary loyalty” can be rhetorically slippery when describing

vulnerable population groups who are under constant surveillance because of their association with crime and terrorism in Russian national discourse. Nonetheless, diasporic loyalty may function as a survival mechanism for many labor migrants who are excluded from Russian social networks and many of whose expectations are to stay for a few years, earn money and return to their home countries (Oparin and Safarov 2014; Varshaver and Rocheva 2016; Zakharov 2015).

Place-based belonging is not only felt through explicit social and affective connections, it is also a practice mediated by the existence of expectations for material rewards in given spaces and social contexts. Geographers such as Devi Sacchetto and Claudio Morrison note that migrants in transnational labor flows create “mental maps” and “geographies of need.” Mental maps “are made of migrant’s aspirations and expectations projected onto transnational spaces. The association of social, economic and civic needs to specific geographical areas generates migrants’ own geography of social spaces where these needs can be pursued” (Morrison and Sacchetto 2014, 37). These spaces are integral to our understanding of the dynamic relationship that material conditions have with affective feelings of belonging in a certain community, political project even physical space. In my study’s case, Morrison and Sacchetto’s framework helps demonstrate how collective imaginations and expectations of higher pay relative to other cities in the former Soviet Union make Moscow attractive to migrants. Even within Moscow, uneven experiences in different settings mediate migrants’ expectations of meeting their material needs. This is indeed the case with the markets, where personal connections and relative social position determine the limitations and possibilities for earnings and employment.

These processes are most pronounced in cities that are hubs for migration and globalized consumption. In her concept of the “Global City” Saskia Sassen writes of how the proliferation of communication and transportation technologies has created the dual dynamic of

accumulation and dispersal of key global economic functions (1988). Sassen notes how technological and communication advancements created new possibilities by eliminating the limitations imposed by distance. At the same time, Sassen asserts that many of the resources needed for these flows are not hypermobile, and that global economic activities are also deeply embedded in the specific histories and material realities of places. Thus, scholarship on global cities allows an approach illustrating how hypermobile social, economic and cultural processes are territorialized in different locational contexts. Moscow's status as a "global city" presents an interesting case: on the one hand, its demographic growth, financial sector, infrastructure and connections to the rest of the world are unparalleled in the region. On the other, Moscow remains deeply tied to the top-down dynamics of the Russian state, and due to the deep embeddedness of private institutions in regional politics, the city's ability to indiscriminately access global financial and migration networks remains quite limited (Brade and Rudolph 2004).

Despite its limitations, Moscow does exhibit many of the characteristics of a global city, especially in its status as a space of massive capital accumulation. To further understand these economic dynamics, especially as they play out in cities such as Moscow, Marxist scholars have spent much time exploring the conditions that allow for cities to become centers of capital. David Harvey notes that the scales and degree of urban capital accumulation depend on three distinct factors: 1. a surplus of labor, or the use of mechanisms to bring in, and discipline labor (e.g. an "open" migration regime), 2. Advanced infrastructure and a means of production; 3. A market for the increasing number of commodities introduced (Harvey 2001). The process of capital accumulation also presupposes a mode of spatial and interpersonal discipline of the surplus of labor through practices such as segregation, policing and the imposition of hegemonic values. In Harvey's formulation, the 21st century is a historical period dictated by the nebulous flows of

capital. The requirements imposed by those flows simultaneously create processes of alienation and accumulation that dictate the broad terms under which urban space is planned, perceived and lived.

Others, such as Schiller and Caglar (2009), have criticized the tendency of scholars to focus on immigrants simply as faceless “labor” in formulations of neoliberalism in the city. Rather, they propose approaches that consider the ways in which migrants “actively contribute to globe-spanning neoliberal processes that come to ground within acts of contemporary place-making” (2009, 178). Thus, migrants cannot simply be conceived as passively affected by or resisting the dynamics of globalization, but are also integral actors whose discourses, labor and social and spatial practices have a profound effect on Moscow’s encounter with capitalism, neoliberalism and globalization.

It is insufficient to entirely attribute explanatory mechanisms of the lived realities of migration simply to economic interest or rational choice. Thus, the categorical bounds of my thesis are not only urban, migratory or economic, but also examine the social and material fields in which religious identity is deployed. These concerns necessitate approaches that discuss the interaction of spiritual practices with the city. Baker and Beaumont’s discussion of a concept known as “the post secular city” allow for understandings of how cities have not suppressed pre-modern and spiritual impulses of newly urbanized populations in the manner expected by many modernist theorists (Baker and Beaumont 2011). To the contrary, because of globalized consumer society’s failure in creating objects of substantive meaning to many people’s lives, the post-secular city is characterized by the strong re-emergence of public religiosity. Religion allows for the production of spaces of belonging: “Those emotionally supportive and nurturing benefits derived from belonging to religious or spiritual groups.. Mediated through both social

contact and connection, as well as through practices associated with religious experiences” (Ibid, 34). This context allows for what Phillip Sheldrake calls a tendency of people to try to “recover a sense that a city can somehow be ‘sacred’ to its inhabitants” (Sheldrake 2007, 252). Religion, when spatialized in the urban context, also allows for the creation of “spaces of becoming” where “a new identity is forged out of a number of different and sometimes competing and existing identities” (Sheldrake 2007, 252). These new identity groups simultaneously assert claims and ascribe sacred significance to the everyday, lived spaces in the city. This is apparent in both the proliferation of Orthodox churches in Moscow after the fall of the atheist state, and in the contentious resistance and control of Muslim public practice like the day of Eid described in the introduction. Moscow is indeed a “post-secular” city, where notions of transcendental spiritual identity interact with modernity and dictate the claims made by different actors on Moscow’s spiritual landscape (Weber 2011).

Marxist urban theorists have also been insistent that a notion of a “right to the city” is integral to framing subaltern practices of resistance to exclusion and exploitation (Harvey 2008; Lefebvre 1970; Marcuse 2010; Soja et al. 2011;). Claims on the city and its variegated spaces often take subversive forms in the everyday practices of “counter publics” who generate alternative discourses and practices that challenge their prescribed “place” in exclusionary societies (Fraser 1996) These claims are grounded in place-based attachments and practices of subversive citizenship, where mobile and fluid identities coagulate into recognizable collectives who seek to shape their immediate environment (Nicholls and Uitermark 2018). Other scholars have theorized similar constrained cultural resistance to oppression as examples of “infrapolitics” or “transversality,” where spatial appropriation by subaltern groups constitutes an important part of contesting unequal power dynamics (Kelley 1996; De Certeau 1984). Such

practices are prevalent in Moscow, where migrants who are constrained and excluded by the “formal” or dominant social and physical infrastructure of the city seek to access informal or unsanctioned social networks to fulfill their social and material needs. No matter the form, the concept of a right to the city moves beyond an individualized normative discourse of the citizen as merely a consumer and generator of capital. Implicit or explicit notions of spatialized claims position the city as a place where new collective conceptions of material and spiritual belonging are practiced. The everydayness of these practices of survival and affirmation function within what Saskia Sassen calls “presence:” where the powerless make history by their very existence in a physical or imagined space (Sassen 2012).

Setting the Stage for Present Dynamics

The scholarly discussions outlined in this chapter involve a plurality of concepts and frameworks to theorize practices and inscriptions of Muslim migrant group identity in the city. The discussion on identity shows how fluid and changing boundaries are splintered and reified by socio-historical forces. Hegemonic and grassroots engagement with group categories are embedded in the physical and discursive contexts that differently positioned actors find themselves in. The success or failure of categories of identity is contingent on a contradictory interplay of past and present and on the structural positioning of groups vis-a-vis others. Similarly, the city is a key framework for understanding the contexts and stakes of these categories. Moscow thus functions as an objective space that groups make social and cognitive claims on based on their needs, aspirations and anxieties. In the city’s everyday spaces, the contradictory legacies of socialist and Soviet nation-building interact with present structural and

ideological forces to create a messy and complex social field that differently positioned actors seek to make sense of with the tools available to them.

Brought together, these conversations allow for a broad theoretical approach to begin to understand the complex dynamics affecting the daily lives of my target population. They are not exhaustive by any means, and in many cases fail to do justice to the complexities of post-socialist urban life and migration. Yet, the frameworks discussed here do provide some context to the complex dynamics that are described in the following chapters of this research.

Chapter 4: Markets and Practices of Group Identity

On September 20th, 2017, Russian media reported what they called a “riot” caused by Tajik workers at the “Moskva” wholesale market in the Lyublino neighborhood on the southern outskirts of Moscow. As a result of clashes with mall and police forces, the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs reported 90 migrant arrests, while civil society groups reported around 250 (Afisha.ru 2017, Lenta.ru 2017). The “riot” occurred as a reaction and protest to an alleged case of brutality towards a Tajik porter by the mall security. The labor advocate group “Tajik Labor Migrants” (*Tadzhiki Trudovie Migrantiye*) reported that as a result of a failed bribe “tribute” payment of 700 rubles, mall security detained 27-year-old Navruz Zakirov and demanded immediate payment. Upon finding him unable or unwilling to pay the bribe, a group of guards beat him and placed him unconscious in a dumpster at the edge of the mall. When he was found by mall workers, Zakirov was transported to a hospital where he remained in critical condition for a brain concussion, cerebral-cranial injury and a bruise on the lumbar spine.

I found out about the event through a social media video post from a Tajik porter, Afshin,¹⁰ whom I met during my time observing the mall. The video showed an episode of an ensuing protest, when Afshin and other workers from the mall surrounded a representative of the “Tajik Labor Migrants” group, eagerly listening to his speech. The man, who has a prominent presence with over 10,000 followers on *Odnoklassniki*,¹¹ a popular social media app with immigrants, was speaking to Russian media about launching an investigation of worker abuse by

¹⁰ All names changed to protect subjects' privacy

¹¹ Lit. “classmates,” and often abbreviated as “OK.” A popular social-media in Russia and the Former Soviet Union. It was originally conceived for older people to keep in touch with people with whom they went to school. Amongst Russians, the app generally has a connotation of older people using it, but I found in my interactions and efforts to establish contacts with Central Asian migrants, the app proved to be even more used than VKontakte, Russia’s number 1 app.

mall security. When I messaged Afshin asking for a reason for the protest, he wrote back, “We were waiting for a response from our (Tajik) leaders in the country, not only because they beat up Navruz, but because of the way we are treated everyday here.” As of January, reporting on the event has died down and Zakirov’s condition is unknown.

The preceding event is one of many abuses media outlets and NGOS have reported. A consciousness of abuses of power by authorities also figures prominently in the responses of people interviewed for this study. The event was the extreme culmination of a variety of instances of harassment that I witnessed on the part of security forces in many of the markets that I spent time in. The event demonstrates the contentious status of commercial spaces for migrants in present-day Russia. The collectivist significance of the event was expressed in the message Afshin sent me, as well as in the protests by Tajik workers and advocates. Such statements shed light on how the market’s social conditions are felt collectively by different groups. They help demonstrate how such collective feelings are expressed in daily and episodic actions of ethnic, religious and class solidarity by racialized groups. Like the morning of Eid described in my introduction, the above protest served as a collective public demonstration by a repressed group. While they differed in that Eid was a celebratory tradition and the protest was a reaction to exploitative workplace relations, the “events” nonetheless provide visual enforcement to feelings of “groupness” and function as important bolsters of group solidarity (Brubaker 2002; Zakharov 2015). As a reaction to racialization in the contexts of the market and Russian society, such actions take on racial meaning in the minds of both participants and observers that reify politics of difference.

Markets occupy complex and contradictory roles in the ideological, political and economic life of migrants in Russia. This chapter will explore a category of physical, economic,

and social spaces inhabited by migrant markets in Moscow by drawing from extended observations and interviews with users of six different markets where Muslim migrants make up a significant segment of the workforce. The social relations of Moscow's "ethnic" commercial spaces are not simply an expression of the current conditions of Moscow migrants but also a reflection of the former Soviet Union's transition to a market system and subsequent patterns of economic differentiation and inequality. Such differentiation created the conditions for an interlinked pattern of massive capital accumulation for certain well-positioned individuals, while at the same time creating the need for migration, informal entrepreneurship and consumption of globalized goods by the poorer segments of society who were most adversely affected by the retrenchment of the state in the 1990's.

The commercial spaces that I observed also functioned in differential manners for people occupying different positions of power. Guards, vendors, workers and consumers all have different social positions and stakes in the maintenance of the status-quo in the markets. Because of the sheer concentration of what are termed "non-Slavic" people, markets function as mundane and daily places where Russians and migrants come to know each other, sometimes engaging in genuine practices of multi-ethnic life. Beyond episodic moments of politicized mobilization shown in the response case of Navruz Zakirov, the daily workings of the businesses and institutions present in the markets allow for expressions of cultural identity through consumption of migrants' "traditional" foods and products. Cultural expression is also found in the spaces and times between official economic activity: from prayer times to break times. For example, in certain markets whole areas are dedicated to catering to transnational forms of Muslim femininity. They engage these notions of gendered religious identity by selling clothes, products, books and perfumes produced throughout the Muslim world. Similarly, food courts and auxiliary

cafes around each market expose users to food from Central Asia, China, the Caucasus and even Cuba. Generally, this cultural milieu ironically reflects both a “bringing together” (*sblizhenie*) of the post-Soviet cultural sphere, as well as a space where Moscow encounters the general demographic and material cultures of globalization. Markets in this context perform as both spaces of economic exploitation and repression while simultaneously allowing for global consciousness, cultural and religious expression: where collective intra and cross-group solidarities are formed. This chapter will focus on the specificities of the contradictory roles that markets have in the everyday experiences of migrants in Russia.

The Emergence of “Migrant” Commercial Spaces in Russia

The proliferation of “ethnic” market spaces that operate in gray areas of legality operates within the broader developments in the Russian economy and political transition. Different ethnic groups and social classes found themselves differentially positioned to take advantage of the chaos of the nineties and the crisis of legitimacy of state and economic institutions undergoing capitalist transformation. These transformations involved actors occupying different positions in the Soviet social system finding themselves differently enabled to engage with the new economic system. As a result of these, different groups found themselves differently racialized in the collective imagination due to demographic patterns of economic practice.

Private economic activity was restricted but ubiquitous for much of the history of the Soviet Union. Gregory Grossman uses the term “second economy” to describe the widespread range of informal and private economic activity that took place during the Soviet period (Grossman 1977). The small-scale capitalist activity that made up the USSR’s second economy

took two major forms: the legally-sanctioned but morally condemned *kolkhoz* markets, where small-scale farmers sold their excess harvests to private citizens, and the black markets that sold products not available through official state-owned stores. Despite propagandizing against speculation, authorities tacitly tolerated the importation and entrepreneurial activity to Moscow, with goods arriving in the gray and black markets that compensated for the “sputtering” state economy of the late Soviet period (Sahadeo 2011).

In both *kolkhoz* and black markets, demographic realities of ethnic supply-chains had a large role in creating current Russian conceptions of race and ethnicity. For example, merchants from the South Caucasus became associated with certain fruits and produce that they sold in cities such as Moscow and St. Petersburg (e.g. Azeris and Armenians were stereotyped as selling pomegranates, nuts and apricots). Because of the Soviet ideological association of trade with speculation and “alien forces” of commerce, many people from the Caucasus became increasingly constituted into the popular Russian imagination as morally questionable “speculators (*fartsovschiki/spekulyanti*)” (Diatlov 2013; Humphrey et al. 2002). As Jeff Sahadeo (2011) notes, regional inequities and increased “gray” economic migration from Central Asia and the Caucasus in the late Soviet period saw the proliferation of Russians using racialized slurs against “southern” vendors in Moscow. Non-Slavic vendors of varied ethnicities and a strong Soviet identity suddenly found themselves lumped together in racialized categories that constituted them as other: “Black” (*chernye*) or “petty traders” (*torgashi*), terms that persist today. The dissemination of these stereotypes into the broader cultural imagination, demonstrates how racialization became embedded in informal economic practices during the Soviet Union.

During the period of Perestroika and the subsequent fall of the Soviet Union, the privatization of the means of production grew the private sector. By the mid 1990’s it occupied

the majority of economic activity in Russia by the mid-nineties. The legitimization of private enterprise did not necessarily result in its formalization so much as the reconfiguration of the sectors that fell outside of the formal purview of the legitimate market. Early commercial nodes, concentrated around metro stations, were generally self-constructed stores (delis, florists, electronics and clothes stores) composed of temporary materials due to uncertainty about economic and regulatory futures. Larger open-air markets grew as international commercial networks were formed and proliferated in Russia. The entrance of the Eastern Bloc into world markets led to the fall of the self-contained supply-chains of the Soviet Union, forcing many factories and localized sites of production to close due to the entrance of new international competition. These old sites of productions were often bought cheaply by unscrupulous business groups, who either demolished them entirely or converted the spaces into sites of distribution for new globalized commercial flows. In the latter cases, owners rented stalls to smaller entrepreneurs while providing “protection” by paying off tax authorities. These new markets were reliant on an influx of cheap consumer goods brought into Russia by commercial networks based on shared Central Asian borders with China’s emerging industrial powerhouse. Business networks met a demand for cheap goods with trucks, buses and trains bringing Chinese clothing and consumer electronics to Russia. The establishment of the Eurasian Customs Unit in 2000, between Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia and Belarus ensured the free flow of goods from those countries into Russia. The same year, a series of visa agreements allowed nationals of former Soviet countries to come to Russia visa-free for ninety days.

Favorable trade and immigration regimes, regional inequalities, and Russian economic growth all converged after 2000 to create the conditions for what has been broadly termed a “shuttle economy:” where human and economic traffic entered Russia at exponential rates,

flooding the market with cheap products and cheap labor. Duty free immigration and import regimes established between Russia and other post-Soviet Central Asian sites became integral to this economic order. Central Asian individuals migrating to Russia from Central Asia would bring bags full of goods to sell, often from neighboring China.

Even within spaces formally designated for commercial activity, the proliferation of organized crime kept many early markets associated with illegality. For example, one of the sites of this study, Sevastopolskaya, an 18-floor Soviet-era hotel converted into an indoor mall, was known in the nineties as a base of operation for organized crime, before its present-day association with South and Central Asian merchants. Similarly, two of the wholesale malls that I



Figure 3: Second-floor view of Moskva Shopping Center.

observed, TK “Sadovod” (“Gardener” Shopping Complex) and TTS “Moskva” (“Moscow” Shopping Center) (Figure 3), with their massive migrant workforce and movement of goods, are generally acknowledged to be the successors to the notorious Cherkizovkiy market that was shut down in 2010 by the city of Moscow

ostensibly for concerns of tax-evasion and human trafficking, but also largely due to a political fall-out between the majority owner, Telman Ismailov, and Vladimir Putin.

Despite it no longer existing, it is worth spending some time to explain Cherkisovskiy Market and its significance to both migration and commercial life in general in Moscow. The market emerged on the site of a Stalinist planned neighborhood in the North East of Moscow. The neighborhood included a never-completed stadium that was meant to be the Soviet Union’s

largest, as well as sports complexes, hotels, a tourist market, and a replica of a medieval Russian *Kreml* fortress. During the fall of the Soviet Union, much of the area was bought up by a partnership of Azerbaijani businessmen, who saw the vast site as a favorable space for a large-scale market. Cherkisovskiy was, at its height, the largest open-air market in Europe and the largest node in Russia's shuttle economy. It incorporated legally gray supply chains and ethnic networks that established commercial flows of urban and national scale, with customers coming from many thousands of miles to buy in bulk or for resale (Mortenbock et. al 2008). Along with the wholesale economy, the market provided auxiliary services related to everything from kindergartens, spas, restaurants, prayer rooms and a synagogue. Widespread press and police reports also described money laundering, prostitution, human and drug trafficking, giving the market its shadowy reputation that it still holds today. Cherkizovkiy market and the eponymous pronoun "*Cherkizon*," meaning a person and space possessing Central Asian, South Caucasian or Chinese phenotypes thus entered popular dialogue as a racialized space of widespread "black" (*Chyorniy*) lawlessness. Its 240-hectar site created headaches for tax and migration authorities and racialized anxieties among many Muscovites. Cherkizovskiy, prior to its shutdown, had an estimated GDP of 180 million USD and employed about 100,000 people, 70% of whom were Chinese citizens, with the remaining population largely belonging to Central Asian and Caucasian ethnicities (Diatlov 2016). The now-defunct Cherkizovskiy was so ingrained in collective Russian consciousness that after its shutdown the market lived on in a 61-episode soap opera named "Cherkizon: Disposable People" (*Cherkizon: Odnorazoviye Lyudi*). Despite its status in the popular imagination as a site of chaos and lawlessness, past interviews with the market's Russian users have revealed a more complex picture, with people describing it as actually quite "clean" and having "convenient prices" (Nedosekina 2011).

The successor markets to Cherkizovskiy, “Sadovod” and “Moskva,” are owned by Azerbaijani billionaires God Nisanov and Zarakh Iliev, who also had large stakes in Cherkizoskiy before it shut down. Their joint real-estate holdings also include the “Yevropeyskiy,” which is known as one of Moscow’s most exclusive high-end malls. In a 2013 interview with *Forbes Russia*, God Nisanov described the legacy of the closure of the Cherkizovskiy market on the development of *Sadovod* and *Moskva*.

It was an unpleasant surprise. But we already had a shopping center "Moskva" and "Sadovod", and they had some vacancies. Of course, tenants from the Cherkizovsky market began to come to us after the closure. We have an opportunity to select and work only with those who have established themselves as a reliable businessman with official documents. We could not accommodate all those who wanted to, so we had to turn away many people. I do not know whether we have lost much from the closure of the Cherkizovsky market. But this closure was a signal to the fact that investing in these type of projects is wrong. It is necessary to work in a more civilized manner. (Forbes.ru 2013)

Nisanov’s words, while showing disappointment at the closure of the market, also express the importance of selecting merchants based on reliability as “businessmen,” implying more strict control by market administration of the people and goods within the markets. As will be shown, Nisanov’s and Illiev’s methods for running a market “in a more civilized manner” involve security personnel and administration exercising coercive control over racialized persons and space, with racialized markers of difference, such as numbered uniforms for the lowest staff, institutionalized to give the market a veneer of legality. While such aesthetic practices help the markets cultivate a “civilized” public image, the largely knock-off products and unauthorized market workers remain largely in a legal gray area and are subject to extralegal harassment and exploitation. According to Madeleine Reeves, if markets do not get too “out of hand,” meaning visibly illegal and chaotic, authorities tolerate them, as they acknowledge that closing one would lead to their reemergence elsewhere (Reeves 2013, 512). Despite official “tolerance” of the markets themselves, the police have initiated raids targeting both “unauthorized” trading and

migrants in many of the markets that I observed. These raids do not target the illegal and corrupt practices of market administration, rather they serve a dual purpose: the first is performative, where police assure an anxious Russian public, showing them that they are in fact “doing something” about the “migrant problem.” The second involves a degree of alignment with the market’s administration: serving to arrest migrant “troublemakers,” like the previously mentioned Tajik protesters, who disrupt the status-quo in the markets.

This reality complicates reductionist accounts of the migration system’s sole reliance on Russian racism and racial interests. Clearly in this case, keeping the largely migrant workforce illegal and harassed benefits the profitability of a firm owned by non-Slavs. Though they are Jewish, both Iliev and Nisanov are from a northern region in Azerbaijan with close linguistic, cultural and ethnic ties to many of their market’s users. This is not to say that all “non-Slavic” migrants experience the same level of harassment in these markets. Social markers (e.g. clothing and Russian proficiency) govern many of the daily interactions that migrants have with authority in the market. As will be shown in the next section, a system of “organized informality” dually allows dynamics of exploitation and survival. Informality allows for guards to harass and exploit workers. At the same time, a system of social and ethnic capital in the differential social spheres of markets allows workers and merchants access social networks to better survive.

Organized Informality

The interaction of Russia’s immigration regime with places of migrant commercial activity is described by Madeleine Reeves as producing a set of “gray spaces” (2013). Gray spaces involve the materialization of informal social relations into a specific setting, where novel codes of conduct, shadow economies, and interpersonal networks are integrated into the

mundanity of daily life. In relative terms it can be understood as, “both a geographical relation to the city and the social relations that this place sustains” (Reeves 2013, 511). Orion Yiftachel describes gray spaces as occupying the space between “whiteness” of “legality/approval/safety” and the “blackness” of “eviction/destruction/death” (2009, 88). As scholars such as David Harvey (2002) note, the current neoliberal entrepreneurial tendencies of the state are integral to understanding the role of such spaces in urban processes of capitalist accumulation. Thus, while Moscow’s markets lie, “in the shadow of the formal, planned city, polity and economy,” they are integral spaces for the flow of goods and labor that the city depends on (Yiftachel 2009, 89). Within an urban studies framework, the gray space is a socially and politically produced, “space of exception” (Agamben 2008; Lefebvre 1992). In such spaces, broad contradictions of economic inequality and social categorization are constituted in ways that both reflect and differ from the dynamics of outside society.

The broader dynamics of post-Soviet informality involve regional commonalities in daily responses to structural deficits. In the case of Russia’s markets, migrant experiences of informality are varied but generally fall under the patterns described by Husayn Aliyev:

In most of non-Baltic former Soviet states, informality not only constitutes a part of popular social culture, but it also provides indispensable social safety nets and serves as everyday coping mechanisms, equally important in economics, politics, civil association and in inter-personal relations. (2015, 187)

Such informality, though not at all exclusive to migrants, serves as a means of surviving in Russia’s harsh economic and social environment. It is a necessary daily practice in the face of extreme cases of economic and social marginalization experienced by many of those who sell and work in Moscow’s “gray” markets. Beyond simply spaces where migrants etch out a living, the cheap bulk prices available in these markets help also help poor Russians access products that are too expensive in many formalized hypermarkets and malls. Many Russians thus

participate in the legally-gray area of the markets to maintain a certain standard of living that would otherwise be unattainable. Numerous researchers as and Russian officials have thus posited that the closure of such markets would not only destroy the livelihood of hundreds of thousands of migrants, but would also disproportionate impact the poor Russians who use the markets as places to access products cheaply (Diatlov 2013; Nedosekina 2011; Moskovskoe biuro 2007).

The enduring informality of Moscow's migrant marketplaces did not arise in isolation from the vast accumulation of wealth and inequality in Russia since 1991. Rather, the specific post-Soviet aspects of informality developed as both a business opportunity for future-oligarchs and the daily necessities of surviving Russia's harsh economic environment. The dominance of informal contacts in Russia to do business and access services is well documented, yet the exclusion of migrants from most informal networks accessed by most Russians has necessitated the emergence of separate migrant networks and practices of informality (Varshaver et al. 2016; Zakharov 2015). This use of informal networks by marginalized migrants can be placed within De Certeau's (1988) notion of "transversality," where subaltern groups engage in everyday practices to navigate the constrained social, physical and economic environment designed by those in power.

The practices of informality that I witnessed in the markets were segmented along ethnic and occupational lines. For example, the poorest vendors (those who cannot afford to rent a stall or are physically unable to work as porters) are forced by guards to the margins of markets. This results in the sidewalks between Metro-stations and the markets being lined with men and women selling pastries, fruits, phone chargers and fidget spinners. These "informal" vendors are generally older than those who have stalls inside and include many women and disabled people.

During my observations in the summer, I noted how their products were laid out on blankets, allowing mobility and quick escape from police harassment. In fact, I witnessed vendors running away from police and guards periodically over the course of my study. This led to my conclusion that the potentiality of run-ins with the authorities figures into daily practices for this vulnerable group of vendors. This pattern of activity shows how practices of governance and spatial control affect differently categorized populations: the poorest, disabled and oldest people are pushed to the physical margins of the market, where they face harassment as nuisances to the thin veneer of public order.

Even among workers who are “formally” employed in the market, legal precarity and a lack of alternative options make informal personal relationships integral. This is especially true for porters whose livelihood depends on securing commission-based work and maintaining a “positive” relationship with corrupt management. The pushcart porters work in each of the markets that I observed. They are generally young and middle-aged men from Central Asia. Their jobs largely consist of moving large amounts of products between stores and customers. During my observations, many of them moved through the markets yelling, “Do you need a pushcart? (*Telezhka nado?*),” while others were called over by vendors to move products. The parking lots in the Moskva and Sadovod complexes are filled with huge trucks containing products from all over Russia and Asia. They share space with buses and vans filled with wholesale buyers from all over Russia. Porters are charged with moving huge bundles of clothing and electronics between stalls, trucks and buses. One such porter, Izzat, who worked at *Moskva* mall, explained the significance of social networks as thus: “you can make maybe 20,000 to 40,000 rubles (350 to 700 dollars) a month as a pushcart driver... but every day you have to pay a 500 ruble ‘tax.’ (*Nalog*)” This practice is well-documented in Russian media

accounts of the markets, the periodic informal payment to the security officer charged with your area of the market. Izzat's use of the term "tax" instead of the general Russian term for bribe, *vzatka* may implicitly denote how power relations between the guards and workers creates a sense of "governmentality," where bribe payments become such a part of daily life in the market that they assume an aura of "legitimate" taxation.

Izzat explained the importance of social connections in this context of variable and precarious employment on commission. "I found work because my uncle is employed here too. He vouched for me and said I was a hard worker, and he introduced me to vendors who I now move their things when they call me on my phone." Izzat and other porters must work quickly, as vendors, who are also pressured by high fees, rents and "taxes," seek to move as much merchandise as possible. In the fast-paced context of the shuttle economy, pushcart drivers are expendable, and can be quickly replaced if they are unable to provide their services at a vendor's convenience. As a result, many porters hope to establish favorable relationships with as many vendors as possible. Both vendors and cart drivers often put in long hours, with both describing 12 or even 14-hour workdays, six or seven days a week.

These dynamics broadly show how informal practices become part of the daily social worlds and economies of markets. As gray spaces, non-legal means of enforcing social and economic roles become integral the daily dynamics of the markets. Customers, guards, porters, and formal and informal vendors all have different stakes and positions in this shadow economy and leverage different practices of self-interest to ensure or better their chances of accessing capital. Access to social networks is integral in this context, as it allows for access to employment in the market. Thus, the circulation of capital becomes embedded in informal social interactions that constitute different users of the markets into different social roles. The next

section will examine how the management creates and formalizes the social roles described above, and how migrant individuals make sense of their roles in the market.

Institutionalized Practices of Difference

As Madeleine Reeves observes, a lack of citizenship and confusing legal status keeps many unskilled migrants from accessing the legal work protections guaranteed in the law of the Russian Federation. Reeves notes that the daily abuse of employers against immigrants serves to show the mundanity of Agamben's "state of exception," where certain groups are constituted into societies lacking full rights, (Reeves 2013). The "state of exception" is embedded in the gray space of the market, where social practices "define and contain a range of marginalized and essentialized 'castes'" (Yiftachel 2009, 90). These practices operate with the stated purpose of limiting migrant ability to organize collectively or seek legal recourse against abuses. Such practices also operate as a method of socio-psychological control to keep migrants in a state of affective precarity. Nikolay Zakharov goes further, seeing such practices and discourses as clear cases of the racialization of economic categories. Zakharov understands these discourses as integral to justifying the vast inequalities integral Russia's process of capitalist transformation,

Insofar as such justification often portrays migrants as inherently incapable of enjoying equal rights with everyone else because of their 'otherness', it serves to preclude the application of the principle of equality to them. (Zakharov 2015: 138)

I found that the practices of "social marking" of the lowest skilled porters and cleaners, who are overwhelmingly Tajik, Kyrgyz and Uzbek, occurs through market authorities requiring them to wear uniforms in each market. Though not technically employed by the market, porters are required to purchase mall-specific ID cards. In two of the malls that I observed, they were

forced to wear a vest with a unique three-digit number, “for complaints (*dlya zhalob*)” written below, and a phone number (Figure 4). Such methods mark the porters as different from other users of the market, and objects of unique surveillance and suspicion. Porters are forced to work long hours, endure fast paces, and face fines and dismissal from the market if they are reported for running into people in the busy aisles. It is no surprise that the young Navruz Zakirov, the Tajik worker who was brutalized and thrown in a dumpster, worked as a porter in the *Moskva* mall.



Figure 4: Porters at Moskva with numbered uniforms

During one day of observations outside the *Sadovod* mall, I found myself in a conversation with two of the mall’s security guards. Both guards had served in the military in some capacity before, with one having fought in the second Chechen war. The Chechen veteran complained to me that his military pension did not fully cover his living costs, which led to him seeking employment in security. The other guard had worked in London, though he seemed unwilling to elaborate on the nature of his work there. During a moment in our conversation when the “Londoner” was telling me about his special recipe for *samogon* (Russian moonshine), the Chechen veteran looked over my shoulder, weaved around me and stopped a Central Asian porter who was walking by. “Where’s your red shirt?” he asked. “I had to wash it today,” replied the porter. The security guard frowned, asked for his ID, and took his picture while holding the ID next to the porter’s face. “I’m going to have to report this,” he said, handing the ID back to the porter and

sending him on his way. After the event, I asked the guard why he had stopped the porter.

“Uniform violation. If we don’t enforce it, we don’t know who’s working here legally or not,” he shrugged. Later in the conversation, I asked about relations between nationalities in the mall, one of the guards said, “they’re fine (*normal’nye*), and we make sure they’re fine,” not wanting to elaborate, he changed the subject back to his favorite paintball ranges.

The guards’ attitude and methods seemed geared towards ensuring that migrant workers in the markets, “know their place:” a form of affective policing commonly employed by security forces in Russia that seeks to keep migrants in a constant state of nervousness in regard to their employment and deportability (Reeves 2015). The workers’ “legality” is largely irrelevant to the guards as long as wearing a uniform correctly allows for identification, and verification that a worker paid the correct fees (and possibly bribes). Thus, the visibility of racialized workers is integral to both the formal and informal security practices of the mall. The fact that one of the guards fought in Chechnya is also worth emphasizing due to his militaristic disposition towards the Muslim workers in the mall. The episode that I witnessed seemed to fall in line with Anna Politkovskaya’s observations in her account, *A Small Corner in Hell: Dispatches from Chechnya*. In *Dispatches*, Politkovskaya describes how soldiers returning to Russian cities imported abusive military practices that they had learned in the warzone, where Muslims were the “enemy.” Veterans often end up in police or security, incorporating a learned suspicion and aggression towards Muslims into their daily work (Politkovskaya 2007).

These militaristic methods were not only apparent among mall security, but also in periodic police raids. One day as I was leaving the *Moskva* mall, entrances were blocked off by police vans that Central Asian men were being shoved into. The workers of the mall observed the events nervously, with many slipping around the preoccupied police officers and leaving the

area. When I asked one bystander what was happening, he replied, “They’re arresting people for illegal taxi driving.” The scale and posture of the police, donning submachine-guns, seemed more like an occupying military presence than a civilian police force making routine arrests. As word spread around the market about police activity, I observed large numbers of people leaving the Market, being careful of taking exits where there were less police or where officers were preoccupied with arresting other people. The coordination through which word spread and people chose their exits points towards social networks based on word-of-mouth that helps to warn the market’s users of impending police raids. On YouTube, home videos showing the immigration crackdowns in the same markets reveal the same dynamics that I witnessed: where people take alternate escape routes and seemed prepared for immigration crackdowns that constitute a daily possibility in the markets.

In this context, even the more favorably placed individuals who run stalls in the market express dismay at the daily racisms they encountered in the mall. One store owner at the *Moskva* mall, Amir, expressed his feelings on being discriminated to me: "I'm a real citizen, my grandfather died in the war fighting the Germans, Moscow is my motherland. Sometimes when people come up to me and they say, 'ay, *cherniye* ("black", derogatory term for a person of Caucasian or Central Asian ancestry)' I look at them and say, 'go fuck yourself (*idi na huy*), my family has probably given more for this country than yours... I've lived here for 20 years, always working. I'm more Russian than even you are!'" The idea of calling Moscow his “motherland” demonstrates the value the city has as a symbolic space of success in the Post-Soviet vocabulary. Beyond Moscow, Amir’s sentiment is rooted in both his assertion of belonging based on shared Soviet wartime legacies and a newer capitalist notion of productive economic citizenship: being an entrepreneur is something Amir can take pride in. Such assertions of productive value to a

national community is connected to what Miles van Niekerk calls a “folk theory of success” where migrants stress their value to a guest nation based on their ability to surmount structural obstacles and achieve success through hard work (2004). Amir’s store is a testament to this attitude: it is constantly packed to the brim with electronics imported from China and he is constantly negotiating buying and selling merchandise that is shipped all over Russia. He is constantly employing compatriot porters to move his merchandise, choosing those that he knows and has already negotiated piece rates with. Thus, despite his racialization in Russian society, Amir’s class position as a small-scale capitalist and an owner of a store gives him a stake in the maintenance of the social status quo at the market.

Legitimate vendors such as Amir are not the only migrants with a notion of their personal value. Another Tajik man employed in the mall as a sweeper, Shohrukh, put it like this: “No Russian wants to do this work, if we don’t do it, no one (will).” Such statements make it apparent that the mall’s many immigrant users have strong notions of value in their role in the functioning of the mall, notions that arise from daily experiences in the market’s contentious social conditions. Thus, formalized practices of categorization by employment,

Collective Identity Formation and Solidarity

While the discussion to this point has mainly focused on their socio-economic dynamics, the markets I observed also functioned as spaces of intense social and cultural activity. As Victor Diatlov posits, “The markets are more than just a place where goods and money pass from hand to hand. They are a meeting place for a permanent contact between people of different cultures; a location and mechanism of getting used to the phenomenon of ethnic and cultural diversity.” (2016; 806) Thus, alongside their existence within racialized and class systems of flows of goods

and economic exploitation, evidence of intragroup solidarity and interactions may help position the markets within what Mikhail Bakhtin would term an “extraterritorial” framework, where the terms and parameters within the space of the market operate to generate different forms of social integration and individual and collective cultural expression than the outside world.

A visit to the Dubrovka, a market known in Moscow to be dominated by Azeri businesses that sell knock-off clothing from Turkey (generally thought to be of higher quality than Chinese knock-offs), reveals how commercial activity can create spaces of cultural cohesion. The market’s many aisles largely sell undifferentiated electronics and fake luxury brands such as Prada, Adidas and Gucci. In what can perhaps be seen as a spatial metaphor for the broader effects of globalization, tucked away in an aisle at the end of the market, away from the consumptive homogeneity of the rest of the market, I found a corridor where the shops revealed a different set of objectives. Down this aisle, the shops had names like “Khadiya,” “Sahara,” “Zamila Style” and included a rich selection of jewelry, Muslim women’s clothing, cosmetics and perfume. While most of the clothing stores were run by women, a Syrian man sat in a stall selling prayer beads, mats, Qur’ans and religious books. Most of the customers were women in hijab, with some men and children among them. Hanging around the aisle for a while, I approached a saleswoman (who later told me she was Dagestani) and explained my research. She smiled and asked me what I wanted to know. I asked her to tell me generally about the aisle. She replied with the following description:

This is the Muslim aisle (*musulmanskiy ryad*). This is the main place in Moscow where you can buy Muslim clothes for women, halal products and medicines, there used to be another place close to Prospekt Mira, but now most of our economic activity has shifted here. Our consumers are from everywhere all of the former Soviet union, but our (*svoi*) sellers are generally from Dagestan and Azerbaijan. People come here for the community, for the respect we give one another. Russians in other places have a way of going about things that sometimes we find too familiar, they swear a lot. Here we say *Assalamualaikum* to each other as we pass by, we never swear or talk rudely because

there are often children who help their mothers out in the shops....Our products are from all over, the best cotton comes from turkey, but a lot of our Islamic medicines and aromas come from the Middle East, Egypt, Saudi, UAE.

Her statement reflects a belief in the aisle as a space of collective comfort, where what are perceived as Islamic norms and values are practiced in spite of hostility on the part of the outside world. The respectable and cohesive norms she expressed to me, much like the products she sold, created an image of a unified and transnational Muslim community or *ummah*. While what I saw in the Dubrovka market was unique in scale, many other markets had at least one store that sold “Muslim” objects. There can be many reasons for cultivating a “Muslim space” in the midst of a huge market engaged with distributing the material objects of globalized consumption. Such spaces may function as recognizable or imagined “points-of-reference” amid the homogenizing forces of the global commercial flows that saturate the rest of the markets. Here Muslim Muscovites can consume their what they believe to be their essentialized identity. Theorists place practices cultural consumption as essential to formations of a post-modern “time of tribes” where



Figure 5: A store in the “Muslim aisle.”

membership may not be necessarily oriented around traditional organizational structures and hierarchies. Rather, individuals construct and affirm their identities through practices of consumptions and “lifestyle” choices (Jayne et al. 2015; Maffesoli 2015). The status of consumer identity and fashionable assertion in public space may be especially salient in post-socialist cities like Moscow, where “Islamic” fashion and lifestyle consumption may function as a qualitatively “new” and relatively acceptable medium of Muslim self-expression

in public space.

Aside from cultivating religious community, many stores and restaurants in each market make explicit reference to ethnicity and nation. Advertisements also denote the presence of immigrants: posters and business cards strewn around the shop floors advertised services such as immigration lawyers, cheap international sim-cards, money transfer services, and dubious “no questions asked” loans. In between jobs and shifts porters and vendors smoke, eat, drink tea in groups in the parking lots and sidewalks outside the market. Such socialization allows workers who speak a single language to feel a collective sense of belonging, as well as come to know about employment of living opportunities. As one vendor explained to me, “When you talk to people you know here, and you are maybe looking for an apartment, someone will say, ‘oh someone from my place just moved out and we have a free bed.’” Beyond living situations vendors and porters come to know tricks and opportunities that help with survival in the market itself.

Each market is served by numerous international restaurants, serving food from Dagestan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, China, Vietnam, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan (Figure 6). Some of the restaurants make explicit reference to their ethnic ownership or the origin of their food, while others have more generalized names like “The Taste of the East” (*Vkus Vostoka*). The spaces, operating as quick stops for food for workers and customers, expose the markets users to different types of food allowing for people of different nationalities to engage in collective experiences. One small anecdote from such a setting was a moment in one such cafeteria where across from me, an older East-Asian woman sat with a younger woman, of perhaps Caucasian descent. As they spoke in their common language, Russian, the East-Asian woman opened a black bag and took out some lychees. “Look its very good, like this,” she said as she peeled the

skin off the lychee and popped it in her mouth. The other lady, perhaps having never eaten a



Figure 6: Ethnic Restaurants in TK Sadovod

lychee before, wore an expression of concern on her face, but took one, peeled it and popped it in her mouth. “*vkusno*” she smiled, “good.” The moment was a small example of the kind of cultural exchange that takes place in these wholesale markets where people of many nationalities and ethnicities and traditions

work together, bargain, and make meaningful social connections on a daily basis. Russians and migrants alike sat in cafes and restaurants often sharing tables, discussing business or deals over tea and food. Similarly, as I walked through the market, south and Central Asian vendors called out to me in Spanish, perhaps phenotypically placing me as one of the many Cubans who take advantage of relatively cheap flights to Moscow in order to buy products in bulk to send back to Cuba. Such markets are perhaps the epicenter of Moscow’s globalized growth, they are “spaces of encounter” that despite their controlled nature at differential marking and control, reveal the deeply connected nature of society in Russia and abroad (Mortenbock et al. 2008). Daily experiences and practices of inclusion may allow many of the market’s different users to engage in collective experiences and feel collective stakes in the market as members of a transnational community.

Conclusion: Markets and Post-Socialist Life in the Age of Diversity

Moscow's migrant marketplaces represent an entanglement of different actors in global and local historical processes. Arising from the economic uncertainty of the socialist collapse, the markets reflect the contradictions of particular practices of capitalism in the post-Soviet context. As gray spaces, they reveal the contradictions within the practices of informality that have proliferated in the post-Soviet sphere. On one hand, they are important spaces for the economic survival for migrants and poor Russians. On the other, they function as spaces of rental accumulation for their billionaire owners, city authorities, low-level administrators and guards who use coercion to secure bribes from the market's most vulnerable racialized workers. The conspicuous categorization and surveillance of migrant porters in the markets may point to specific practice of how management produce and reify racial categories in the Russian workplace (Roediger 2012).

As the fate of Cherkizovkiy Market reveals, current successor markets such as Moskva and Sadovod present a greater veneer of securitization and organization that mask the informal relations that sustain their microeconomic functions. For migrants, informal practices dually present opportunities for survival and the means through which they are most exploited.

At the same time, the institutions and social worlds that exist within the markets function as important mechanisms in producing notions of collective stakes and corporate identity that span within and across the varied social-groups, classes, genders, and ethnicities that operate in the markets. Group identities in relation to others are formed and reproduced in these contexts: as Mortenbock et. al posit, such markets function as sites in which "different cultures engage in a variety of encounters alongside the homogenizing forces of globalization" (2008; 347). Beyond mere spaces in which users encounter varied existing cultures, the markets also necessitate the

production of new subjectivities that are expressed in collective and individual actions. Those actions work towards objectives that are rooted in the social relations of each individual market and are responses to the needs and ideologies prevalent in post-socialist society in general.

Chapter 5: Ethnic and Religious Publics and Counter Publics

“They’re just here to work, I don’t know why you’re making all this fuss about citizenship,” a Russian friend told me after I described my research to him at the bar where he worked. He was amused when I showed him a group picture of me with members of a Kyrgyz wrestling club with whom I was training, “Look!” he yelled to the other bartender laughing, “It’s Charles with a Kyrgyz gang!”

I was often unsatisfied with the assumptions that many of my Russian friends and acquaintances had of migrants. Many of the people I described my research to would express incredulousness at migrants doing anything other than working all day and going straight back to “their *resinovnyie kvartiri* (illegally occupied, overcrowded Soviet apartments) in Odintsovo or other suburban towns in Moscow Oblast.” To many of my Russian counterparts, migrants were hyper visible when working: construction workers especially were a common sight in Moscow, especially in the wake of widespread public works during the summer of 2017 in preparation for the 2018 World Cup. As I overheard one young Russian woman saying to her friend at a cafe: “I was rushing to the bus across the street, but the whole sidewalk was covered in repairs (*remont*) and crowds of Tajiks, I turn the other way, and I see repairs- again with a crowd of Tajiks. I can’t walk anywhere now! Everywhere is crawling with repairs and Tajiks!” In the eyes of many Russians, immigrants are principally associated with the work they do. As the quote from the young Russian woman above demonstrates, migrants become visible when they are associated with daily inconveniences: blocked paths, overcrowded metros and aggressive vending. It became apparent that hypervisibility while at work, be it construction, cleaning or formal and

informal vending, helps to create an aura of mystery surrounding migrant life after work. One study on personal relationships between Russians and Caucasian migrants found sustained cultural contact to be a good predictor of positive expectations of personal integration among migrants in Moscow, but a poor predictor among Russians (Lebedeva, Tatarko, and Berry 2016). The study goes on to note that many of the Russians surveyed gain personal contact to migrants through work networks. This runs counter to Marxian assertions of organic solidarities emerging from shared working conditions and can perhaps be explained because of post-Soviet ideological legacies. The morality of market participation remains contentious in Russian public dialogue, with Soviet attitudes that see the kinds of market activity that migrants engage in as “speculation” or “lowly unskilled work” such as that done by *limitchiki* during Soviet times. These stereotypes engage racialized and gendered archetypes of market activity (The male Azerbaijani cotton or pomegranate seller, the Uzbek woman peddler) and place them in harsh normative frameworks (Mandel and Humphrey 2002).

Thus, the richness, challenges and complexities of daily life in migrant Moscow are often overlooked by members of the ethnic Russian majority. Noting this ignorance about migrant life on the part of Russians, as well as formal and informal methods of exclusion, a body of Russian work exists on what has been dually termed a “second society” or “parallel city” within migrant Moscow (Varshaver and Rocheva 2016; Tyuryukanova 2013). Such theories have posited that limited social and habitual interaction between migrants and “mainstream” Muscovites, formal and informal discrimination limiting access to official institutions, as well as a lack of spatialized practices of ethnic segregation like in the West, has led to the emergence of an archipelago of migrant institutions that are largely hidden and scattered throughout the city. Others (Kosygina 2010) find that despite widespread discrimination in housing, legal and service access, racialized

migrants do not necessarily inhabit entirely different social spheres from Russians. As Kosygina notes, “the factors facilitating the creation of new connections include shared space and shared interests” (2010, 60). Kosygina defines shared space as living arrangements, workplaces, and recreational practices, as well as everyday interactional milieu. From this standpoint, both Kosygina’s and my own research has shown that while migrants construct specific social networks delineated by national, ethnic or religious terms, their social networks are by no means limited to those areas.

This chapter draws on ethnographic and participant observation within two associations: a Muslim youth-volunteer group and a Kyrgyz belt-wrestling (*kuresch*) club, as well as sustained observation in a Ramadan iftar-tent (*shatyor*).¹² While migrant civil institutions, organized around ethnic, clan or religious lines provide services that fill collective social, consociational, and practical needs that are not met by mainstream institutions, their functioning is ingrained in differential and contingent relationships with the city and its actors. Each civil service organization involves forms of material and social significance for its members, as well as performative and moralistic conditions placed upon participants. The use of space by each of these institutions is also an important factor in their engagement with the city and its inhabitants. It is in overlapping spatial practices of interiority and publicness that community is both formed and performed. Thus, the religious and ethnic institutions that serve migrants go back and forth between private gatherings away from hostile elements of outside society and public performances of respectability and collective efficacy. By occupying the same space as Russians,

¹² Iftar tents are a generally-recognized phenomenon during the month of Ramadan. *Iftar*, meaning breakfast, is the post-sunset meal that marks the end of a daytime period of fasting. Traditionally, iftar meals can be both private and public affairs. In this case, the *shatyor* was sponsored by the *MosDUM* (*Duhovnoe Upravleniye Musulman Goroda Moskvy*) The Muslim Spiritual Council of the City of Moscow.

migrants engage in performative practices that engage the broader (Russian) Muscovite community.

As the contentious display of spatial appropriation during Eid al-Fitr, described in the introduction demonstrates, migrants are forced to constantly think about their visibility in public space. Along this vein, some civil-society groups observed were deeply invested in practices of “respectability” where leaders of the group sought to optimize their image in the eyes of Russians by embodying ideal notions of organization and collective morality. Leaders of the institutionalized Muslim civil society who were observed in this study sought to construct an imagined Muslim collectivity by engaging internal Muslim and external Russian publics. The attitudes expressed by members in the Tatar-dominated Muslim administration reflect similar findings by Oparin and Safarov (2014): assimilated and upwardly mobile Muslims who simultaneously seek to represent the entirety of the Muslim constituency, while excluding the most vulnerable and racialized migrant members from positions of leadership.

Conversely, the ethnic Kyrgyz sports club that I observed engaged in the construction of an ethnically delineated community where practices seemed at odds with many of the normative frameworks of dominant Russian and Muslim society. This “counter-public” constructed solidarities outside of the broader public realm, whose terms operated to exclude them (Fraser 1990). Using these methods, migrant and Muslim institutions seek to lay differential claims to both physical and imagined spaces of belonging within Muscovite and Russian Society.

Condoned Muslim Civil Society

During the Month of Ramadan, a series of Muslim organizations set up an annual tent in front of the Memorial Mosque. The Ramadan gazebo, termed a *shatyor*, is a large white tent

where volunteers serve free *iftar* meals and organize public programming. The Memorial Mosque sits on the outside of Moscow's "Victory Park" (*Park Pobedy*) on Poklonnaya Hill in Moscow's Western Administrative Okrug. Victory Park was constructed in the sixties as an open-air museum commemorating the Russian victory over Napoleon in 1814. In 1995 the park was renovated to incorporate celebrations of militarism and nationalism, including a museum dedicated to the Soviet victory in World War II and a massive obelisk by Georgian sculpture Zurab Tsereteli (Grant 2001). An elaborate Orthodox church and a synagogue dedicated in memory of the Holocaust both stand in the borders of the park. The Memorial Mosque, while also built to honor Muslim soldiers who lost their lives in World War II, is the only religious building that sits outside of the fences of the park, away from the pedestrian foot traffic that normally crowds the pathways on nice days. The Mosque can be seen in parallel with the status of Islam in Russia today: symbolically incorporated, yet on the margins of a national imaginary that relies increasingly on putting historical and symbolic events into an Orthodox perspective (Weber 2011).

This spatial order reflects the dynamics of power that Muslim leaders engage with in Moscow. The following sections demonstrate how leaders and middle-class members of Muslim civil society generally represent a Tatar-dominated understanding of Islam and the Muslim community in their efforts to lobby for Muslim inclusion into Russian society. They do this while simultaneously excluding a non-Tatar majority of Muslims from substantive representation and leadership roles. The youth group that I spent time with, while still being majority Tatar, also has upwardly-mobile Central Asian individuals in their membership. Yet, it was apparent that while they pay symbolic reference to various Muslim ethnicities, the ideological sensibilities of

the group reflects a conciliatory approach that does not question the racism in dominant society and structural exclusion of Muslim migrants.

A Typical Iftar Evening

Generally noticeable upon entering the space, was how the gazebo that was set up with lavish, colorful decorations and lighting contrasted the dreariness of the highway outside the tent. Beyond being well decorated, the gazebo was also large: tables inside allowed for several hundred people to sit to break their daily fast. The gazebo had a stage, sound system, and several televisions. About an hour before sundown, at 8 pm, a line would form at the entrance, those in line were men of heterogeneous ethnic backgrounds, with no clear, visible majority. The hosts who gradually would let in the crowd and seat us were all young, both men and women, and mostly Tatar, although, as I would find out later when I got to know them, two of the volunteers were Uzbek, one Kazakh and one Tajik. Caucasians were conspicuously missing from the administration, although they were well-represented among the people attending and performing at the iftars. Every night, I would line up in the large crowd of single men, who formed a clear majority of the crowd. The line was long, as we were let in in small batches as they prepared the tables. Families and women did not have to wait in line and had separate seating once they were inside. The ethnic origins of the men I would find myself seated with were diverse. Over the course of the month I found myself becoming acquainted with Tajiks, Chechens, Dagestanis, Kyrgyz, Uzbeks, Tatars, Bashkirs, Kazakhs, Azeris, a Francophone Ivorian man, and a non-Muslim ethnic Russian from Vladivostok who stumbled upon the gazebo while walking around the nearby park. Programming would consist of a mix of speakers, live and recorded music and



Figure 7: Iftar at Memorial Mosque.

advertisements on the televisions. When sundown approached, people poured water and salads were passed out. An *azan* and a supplication (*dua*) was recited. As is customary around the world, people said “*bismillah*” and broke fast with a date and some water. Foods generally consisted of a mix of soups, salads, lamb pilaf rice (*plov*), fruits and Tatar fried dough (*chak chak*), teas and tarragon soda.

Performances continued after the programming as well as announcements for attendees to contribute to

charity funds. Upon leaving the tent every night a line of late-arrivals congregated outside. As there was generally no space left for them inside, volunteers would serve this late-coming group to-go meals on plastic plates, which they would eat outside of the tent. Judging from their clothing, this crowd was significantly more working-class, and composed of a clear majority of Central Asians in comparison with the more heterogeneous mix of people seated inside the gazebo.

Hegemonic Multiculturalism and the Muslim Moral Public

In the 2013 Opening Ceremony for the same Gazebo, the head of the MosDUM, Ravil Gainutdin said, “Our gazebo is a space of encounter, in order to come closer to the cultural world of our peoples” (Sputnik 2013). The quote clearly demonstrates an intent to use the month of Ramadan to showcase Islam to Russian society. Indeed in 2017, the year of this study, the front wall of the gazebo featured a large day-by-day schedule of programming featuring a vast array of

cultural showcases. Specific countries (Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Iran) ethnicities (Laki, Avaris, Finnish Tatars) and Russian regions (Tatarstan, Dagestan, Chechnya) were set to take the center stage each evening. Cultural showcases included dances and songs, as well as poetry recitals in Arabic and the native languages of the performers. During each night's programming, music, dance and performances seemed to constitute each nationality along the lines of surface-level cultural traits. This notion of multiculturalism is familiar in Russia as a legacy of Soviet policies such as the "friendship of the peoples," where public performances of essentialized cultural and ethnic cultures were institutionalized as part of the creation of national republics (Lebedeva and Tatarko 2013).

The Iran night assumed an atmosphere of international diplomacy, as Muslim figures from throughout Russia took part in welcoming an imam from Iran who was invited to speak. He was seated next to head mufti Gainutdin (who rarely appeared in the gazebo in person over the course of my study) and Ildar Alyautdinov, whose role in these evenings is elaborated on later in the section. The Iranian delegate, speaking in Farsi and through a Russian translator, stressed the importance of Muslim charity, especially in the face helping the victims of the Syrian War. After the speaker finished, two choirs from Tehran, one men's and one boy's, took the stage to perform religious songs. After the evening concluded I spoke to a Tajik man I was sitting close to about how he enjoyed the programming. As I had expected, he began with speaking about the shared Persian culture of Tajiks and Iranians, but his statements soon went in a candid direction that I did not foresee: "Iranians aren't real Muslims (*Chistiye Musulmani*), they see the revelations of others besides the Prophet." Here my neighbor was referring to the reverence of the Twelve Imams in Shi'i Islam, a practice many Sunnis see as idolatry (*shirk*) or innovation (*bid'ah*) from the original revelation of the Qur'an. Here clearly, even on the month of Ramadan,

members of the Moscow Ummah disagree over the contours and elements of the “good Muslim” community. Even those in attendance of the iftar expressed opinions that were far from the rosy and unified picture painted by the multicultural Tatar-led programming.

In the opinions of some of the non-Tatar people whom I spoke with, Tatar performances of multiculturalism fall short of substantive representation for the more marginalized ethnic groups who now make up the majority of Moscow’s Muslims. Some people didn’t see problems of representation, with a common refrain being that, “all Muslims are brothers.” Yet, some Tajik and Caucasian men interviewed outside of the context of Ramadan programming expressed discomfort with the Tatar dominance of mainstream religious programming. One individual, Zagir, a “visible”¹³ believer from Dagestan told me, “I don’t like the Tatars, they talk a lot about how Muslims are all brothers, but when you go to the *masjid*, (Mosque) they’re very closed off and against talking to people from the Caucasus.”

Zagir, like many Muscovite Muslims with disagreements with Tatar dominance in mainstream Mosques, chooses to worship in informal prayer halls, away from official practices of moral controls. Such an attitude is consistent with Oparin’s observations of Tatar reception of Caucasian Sufi folk *zikr* practices in Moscow’s Cathedral Mosque. Because of their “noisy” nature, such practices are only allowed to take place in the basement of the Cathedral Mosque at specific times, often late at night (Oparin 2017). The attitudes that circulate among those invested in institutionalized Islam in Russia, are saturated preconceptions about what “appropriate” and respectable Muslim behavior is. The programming at the Ramadan Gazebo reflected these tendencies, which manifested themselves in many ways. For examples, certain evenings were also sponsored by specific companies, notably UMMAJOBS, a craigslist-like job-

¹³ Meaning that he wore a long beard, a practice that is frowned upon in official dialogue as “alien” to Russian Islam.

searching software for Muslims seeking employment that corresponds, in the words of their speaker, “to Muslim values.” While references to a unified and unproblematic Muslim set of values abound, there is no real consensus within Moscow’s Muslim community as to what exactly those values are.

The visible face throughout the iftar programming was that of Ildar Alyautdinov, a Tatar and chief Imam at the Moscow Cathedral Mosque. Alyautdinov is a particularly visible public figure in Russia, often releasing statements to the Russian press about the “position” of the Muslim community on certain issues. He has authored numerous books with titles like *Why do I Need Islam? (Zachem mne Islam?)* and *The Secret to Family Happiness (Sekrety semejnogo schast'ya)*. His concepts generally put Islamic concepts of faith and morality into a frame of new-age style self-help. He also has a notable repertoire of short videos on YouTube that were played during every single iftar dinner that I attended for this study. They contained advice about morality, family, hard work as well as ruminations on metaphysical notions of the nature of God, and the origins and power of human intellect. “The abilities of the brain are endless...” began one video, before going on to explain that the brain was a gift from God, that needs to be cherished in deployed in the improvement of society and the glorifying of God. Other videos focused on issues of morality: “Jealousy eats away at the soul... hard work and spirituality are its cures.” Or, “call your mother, because parents are the most important thing in the world.” One video showed Alyautdinov with his wife and two children at a playground. “Back in the day,” began Alyautdinov, “we didn’t have all these gadgets to stay connected. We wrote letters and visited each other... Now even though we have the abilities to stay connected, we grow farther and farther apart..” At this point large red letters appeared across the screen: “every fifteen seconds, a DIVORCE happens” (*kazhdiy 15 sekund proizhodit RAZVOD*) “What do people do

these days? They don't call. they don't write. they don't miss (their loved ones)." The video goes on to recite Qur'anic text about the importance of cherishing your wife as a gift given to all men by God.

The last video demonstrates how culturally-assimilated Tatars like Ildar Alyautdinov attempt to model behaviors for the mobile Muslim ummah. While the video does not explicitly state its target being labor migrants, an inference of such an intended audience is not unwarranted. The video's subtext of long distance communication presupposes an audience that is supporting families across borders and far away. This feeling and acknowledgment of distance from one's loved ones is not something felt as strongly by the Tatar individuals I spoke to in this study: While many had relatives in Kazan or Ufa, only one mentioned having immediate family (his parents) living across the country. The video was also explicitly gendered, presupposing a male audience who, according to Alyautdinov, have a religiously-ordained responsibility to keep a long-distance family together. Laura Kunreuther notes this tendency of using mass-media for long distance communication to constitute a transnational moral community as a "technology of the voice" (Kunreuther 2006). While the video referenced in this study implicitly acknowledges that many Muslim men with wives in their home countries do not live up the "Muslim ideal" of family cohesiveness, its role in this case is used to constitute and deploy an aspirational "moral community" (Babst 2011). This moral community is led by middle and upper-class Tatars like Alyautdinov, who see themselves embodying an ideal of personal moralities, while chastising economic migrants of other ethnicities for "not keeping in touch" with their far-flung families.

This modeling of morality also extended to rhetoric that addressed issues of extremism and the Muslim community's place in Russia. Alyautdinov who was present in person almost every night of iftar, would often introduce speakers on a given night's programming, as well as

give speeches of his own. On one night, Alyautdinov gave a short talk about the “meaning of Jihad.” His explanation had two sides, as a personal (*lichniy*) struggle for spirituality, as well as a collective (*kollektivniy*) struggle for improvement (*usovershenstvovaniye*). Improvement, generally speaking, was positioned as the promotion of peace and charity as well as the development of the material assets of humanity. Another night, Alyautdinov also spoke about misunderstandings of Islam and the misdirections of many of its adherents. Particularly he spoke of how spiritual emptiness (*duhovnaya pustota*) is to blame not only for Muslim extremism, but also epidemics of alcoholism and drug use in Russia. Alyuatdinov positioned both phenomena to Satan’s power in a modern society that lacks collective spiritual direction. Alyuatdinov stressed the importance of educating children according to their own religious traditions. The loss of spiritual traditions was especially hard on Muslims living in Russia according to Alyuatdinov, as “another’s religion, another’s views, another’s culture is imposed on Muslim children already when they are in school.” He condemned extremism in strong words: those “extremist elements,” like ISIS, who take advantage of that spiritual emptiness in Alyautdinov’s words, are none other than “Satanists dressed in the Prophet’s clothes (*Odeyanie Proroga*).”

Alyuatdinov’s contentions highlight a key element of current discourse in Russia: that spirituality is becoming increasingly enmeshed in public life, and that Alyuatdinov’s efforts highlight his desire for equal Muslim incorporation into a new imaginary that views traditionalism and spirituality as integral to the functioning of the state and citizenry. But as is apparent, “equal Muslim incorporation” in Russian society does not necessarily mean equal incorporation for all members of Moscow’s diverse ummah. Rather, through attempting to situate Muslim inclusion in Russian society along the lines of the perceived necessity of public enactment of religious values to combat “spiritual emptiness,” Alyuatdinov’s assertions perhaps

echo the purpose of the Ramadan gazebo. Whereas respectable discourse from Tatar clergy attempts to cement an essentialized Muslim position in a “post-secular” Russian public sphere, the gazebo itself, as an embodied set of social and spatial practices, seeks to establish and police Muslim morality on a Moscow’s “post-secular” urban landscape (Beaumont and Baker 2011).

The MosDUM Youth Group

The youth volunteers from the Ramadan gazebo would meet once or twice a week, generally on Saturdays at a community center in Eastern Moscow. Individual members and sub-cliques of the group would meet up, usually during Jumma prayers at the Cathedral Mosque and to have a meal at a Central Asian Café (*Chaikhona*) after prayer. All of the roughly 40 members were under 30 years old: roughly evenly divided between men and women. They were generally Tatars and Bashkirs, but no members from the Caucasus, though there were four individuals from Central Asian backgrounds, two Uzbeks, a Tajik, and a Kazakh. Their class background was heterogenous: some of them had parents from the Soviet managerial class, who worked in Moscow in government and engineering firms. Others had more working-class family backgrounds whose parents worked in mid-managerial positions in the service industry but were generally upwardly mobile themselves: either enrolled in university or holding technical or online jobs. One Tajik member of the group, Umid, was seven years old when his family moved to Moscow. His parents worked as managers in a large flower shop close to a Metro Station in Central Moscow. Umid had studied computer science in university and had created an online flower-delivery business with a sleek website and app. His attitudes reflected greater comfort with Russian society than many other Tajiks that I had spoken to: “All my friends are here, and many of them are Russian, of course Tajikistan is my homeland (*Rodina*), but my life is here.”

The youth group members I spoke to all expressed some form of the statement, “all Muslims are brothers.” Asking members why they joined the group also proved interesting, as they gave explanations relating to their personal interests, as well as feelings of duty towards a general “Muslim community.” Two of the men I spoke to expressed interest in pursuing careers as scholars in Islam, hoping to study in places like Cairo or Damascus. Another, an Uzbek engineer whose Instagram account includes a steady stream of photos at gala events at the Uzbek Embassy, put his reasons for volunteering thusly: “I want to be a good example for young people. I want to help the poor and I want to improve the lives of Muslims in Russia.” Another volunteer, who had moved to Moscow from Kazakhstan to study at the Institute of Natural Gas at Moscow State, spoke of how it was important to him “to have Muslim friends, and be involved in Muslim society” when he is away from home.

Activities at the youth club varied. Often, they consisted in meals and tea, and meetings with Qur’anic explanations and collective prayers. The internal atmosphere was relaxed, with socializing common around meals and tea, so I got to know many of the male members of the group quite well. Mixed-gender seating was not practiced; therefore it was difficult for me to speak with women in the group. That isn’t to say that I didn’t witness mixed interactions and even what could be described as moments of flirtation between male and female members of the youth group. One day sunny day in July, the group had an outing to a park close to the community center.

The day’s programming included many of the volunteers’ families, who participated in field games like an egg-in a spoon race, a potato sack race and tug of war. Such games are common in Russia among youth groups and in summer camps, even going back to such “teambuilding” games common in the Soviet *Komsomol* or Pioneers. The people were split off

into six teams, mixed by age and gender. As the teams prepared to begin the circuit of games, a senior member of the group, a Tatar man named Fazil spoke thusly: “Everybody should do their best in these games. Each of us must play fairly and give it our all.” Fazil continued, “Russians in this park will look at us, and see a group of Muslims. They’ll be curious to see our character, so let’s show them the discipline and fun we can have!” These words seemed strange the midst of such light-hearted fun. Yet it demonstrated the extreme self-consciousness of the membership of institutionalized Muslim civil-society: a dual desire to make a good impression collectively by embodying values of hard-work, sobriety and normalcy as a distinct visible minority. These strategies embody methods of inclusion that rely on accessing existing notions of “good citizenship” in Russian by embodying them, rather than challenging the rules of exclusion themselves.

Gender also figured into this performance of moral work. The lecturers were always male and the only way women figured into theological conversations was by asking questions on the meanings of the stories. The main opportunity for leadership roles, which the women took full advantage of, were in meetings around event-planning, where women were involved in speaking in front of the whole youth group and delegating leadership positions. One such event was the midsummer harvest festival of Sabantuy that was to be held in Kolomenskoe Park in southeast Moscow. Sabantuy is a Bashkir and Tatar pre-Islamic holiday that is traditionally set to mark the harvest. Despite its ethnic and secular characteristics, MosDUM had been granted a space to set up a tent and daycare center on the grounds of the festival. The tent was to showcase informational pamphlets about Islam and serve tea and to the guests. “A lot of Russians will be there... so we have to show them what we are like,” said one of the women organizers. A male member of the group read off names delegating roles in the tent and the daycare center, while

mostly men were chosen to work in the tent, women were the only ones who “volunteered” to oversee childcare duties for Sabantuy.

The youth group demonstrated how social and ideological contexts affect those who participate in the labor of creating collectives. Being conscious of negative attitudes against Muslims on the part of Russian society, the youth group members sought to cultivate positive and accessible image of Islam and Muslims when the group found itself in public. They did this by fitting hegemonic discourses about collective efficacy into their daily language and public face. The burden of these performative practices is put upon differentially-situated members within that group. While men dominate authority in conversations about theology, women exert considerable labor in the day to day organizing, planning and event-implementation in the group. As a non-Muslim being hosted by the group, I was made conscious of these efforts: members were extremely welcoming to me, engaged me in conversations, and patiently explained aspects of their religion to me. The discourses and performances that circulated within the group seemed to connote a genuine engagement with their belief of a cohesive Muslim community in Moscow. At the same time, their class and ethnic backgrounds differed from many of the other people I engaged in this study, making it difficult for them to empathize with the actual daily conditions faced by the majority of Moscow’s Muslims.

Moskva Alish: A Kyrgyz Male Counter-Public

During the previously-mentioned festival of Sabantuy, I had met with members of a Kyrgyz *alish* club. Also known as Belt-wrestling and *keresh*, *alish* is one of the oldest recorded sports, appearing in the Epic of Gilgamesh, as well as bronze reliefs dating from 2600 BCE (Crowther 2007). *Alish* generally involves two fighters in a ring who each wrap a cloth or girdle

around their opponents back and attempt to throw their opponents off their feet. The sport is especially popular with Central Asian and Turkic-speaking peoples of Russia and the former Soviet Union. Alish is so ingrained in regional Central-Asian identity that world championships are often attended by heads of state such as Vladimir Putin or the late Uzbek president Islam Karimov. The Sabantuy that I attended heavily featured alish at the event, as ethnic teams of Uzbeks, Kyrgyz and Tatars fought each other, often dressed in their national colors. Like many public displays of the martial arts across the worlds, racialized subtexts and rivalries pertaining to collective national “strength” figured prominently in front of the diverse audience at Sabantuy with money, personal prestige, and national pride at stake in each bout.

Behind the main ring where athletes were warming up for their bouts, I approached a group of athletes, asking to speak to their trainer. Two of the younger men brought me to Nubrek, who was 38 at the time of the study and from a small village in Kyrgyzstan. He initially treated me with a fair amount of suspicion, after explaining myself as a student from America, who wanted to learn about their club and their reasons for doing Alish. After I expressed interest in the sport itself, Nubrek invited me to the club on the condition that I later pay the 800 ruble (~15 dollar) monthly membership fee.

The club met at 9:30 pm three times a week: Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. The time, as Nubrek would explain to me, was selected because most construction jobs would finish around 8 or 8:30 at night, giving the club’s members, who almost all worked in construction, the time to come over. Over a month and a half of my remaining time in Moscow, I managed to attend 11 practices.

The first time I showed up at practice Nubrek did not give me an address, telling me rather to meet at the Northeastern Moscow Metro station of Baumanskaya. Upon arriving, Nubrek and

two other Kyrgyz men met me, we shook hands and began to walk. About ten minutes from the station was a large white domed building – what looked to be an Orthodox church. “Is this a church?” I asked as we approached, “Thankfully no,” laughed Nursultan, “but it used to be.”¹⁴

We entered the gates and a group of about ten men greeted us who were seated on a ledge



Figure 8: Warm-up at Moscow Alish.

outside the “church.” Those who arrived before me, took great care to shake everyone’s hands.

“Assalamualaikum,” “Wa aleikum salaam,” they each said to one another. The conversations I heard were exclusively in Kyrgyz, and I noticed many of the younger members struggled in Russian when speaking to me. As we entered the building, a room was open where an older Russian lady sat watching television. Nubrek went up to her and greeted her. In reply she grunted, “Good evening” and passed him a set of keys.

I changed out of my street clothes in the locker room and put on some shorts and t-shirt. Nubrek came up to me and noting the short length of my shorts said, “Usually shorts like these are not

¹⁴ Later, out of pure-curiosity, I found out the story of the church where the practices were held. Its full name is the Church of the Intercession Assumption. Originally consecrated as Old Believer church in 1911, it was eventually disbanded by Soviet authorities in 1933 and its valuable collection of Old-Believer Orthodox icons was transferred to the State Tretyakov Gallery, where, as of this writing, they remain displayed. The church was changed into a sport hall and gym in the 1960s, hosting a sport club named “Spartak.” The building and the club were both privatized in the nineties, yet the church’s continued use as a gym remained a sore-point for the Old-Believer Orthodox community in Moscow, who have directly appealed to president Putin and Mayor Luzhkov for its return to the community. After my leaving Moscow, the process of its restoration into a place of worship kicked into high gear, and by December 20th, 2017 the Church was formally returned to the Old Believers Orthodox Church, with the first thanksgiving service in 85 years being held there on December 24th. Writing to Nubrek, he told me his Alish Club has since found another gym space to rent that is nearby. I did not witness any of the process as its culmination happened after I left, so I cannot do it justice to it in this study, although it does represent an interesting pattern of revanchist significance of certain urban spaces in the wake of the fall of the atheist Soviet state. More information on the church (in Russian) can be found at: http://ruvera.ru/news/moleben_v_pokrovo_uspenskom_hrame

allowed.” “I’m sorry, I didn’t know” I replied, “Why not?” “Well, see,” he began, grabbing his own ankle-length capris, “These are good, Muslim men just don’t wear what you have on, but its fine for today!” I always wore longer pants to practices after that, but I often noticed younger members wearing shorts the same length or even shorter than mine.

We walked upstairs to the main gym room that had been the prayer hall when the building was a church. The room had a large wrestling mat, with an elevated section that must have once served as a pulpit with exercise equipment and weights. The members of the club began with free forms of exercises, sparring with one another and doing individual stretches. It was at this point that Nubrek took out his phone, opened his *OdnoKlassiniki* (OK) app, and began to live stream the training by setting the phone on a window ledge to record the room. Nubrek at this point moved to the center of the wrestling mat. Noticing this, the other men at the training session moved to a wall and formed a line. When everyone has gathered, Nubrek shouted: “Assamualeikum!” to which the everyone else shouted back: “Wa aleikum salaam!” Nubrek then led a warm up of stretches and cardio.

Subsequent training sessions often went similarly, with warm up sessions, individual sparring and group wide tournaments, all of which were always livestreamed on OK. As I spent more time with the team, I came to know many of the members. They ranged in age from 17 to 50, almost all of them were construction workers and many of them lived and worked together. Two of the men, one of whom was Nubrek, were married and living with spouses in Moscow. Most others were single, and three had wives in Kyrgyzstan. In order to understand the function of the wrestling club as a social space, I initially asked members, “why do you do Alish?” Nursultan, a worker in a deli and a longer-term resident in Moscow replied: “It gives me satisfaction, it’s nice to be together with other Kyrgyz people and test my strength and carry out

our traditions together.” He continued, “it helps structure my life, all my time is either, work, family or alish.” Other members echoed these sentiments, with Iskandar, a 20-year-old construction worker saying, “it helped me feel comfortable, it helps me get stronger, and its nice to be with other Kyrgyz people, when we’re not doing work.” Another interaction with a member of the group points to the ethnic aspect of the club’s identity, which may be constructed as oppositional to other ethnic groups. When a member of the club asked my ethnicity and I told him that I’m Black and Italian, he seemed relieved: “I thought you were Uzbek. It’s better that you’re not.” While national pride figures prominently in the attitudes of the members, Nubrek, as the clear leader of the club, dually understands his mission as an ethnic and moral one:

I started this club two years ago because I decided we Kyrgyz people needed another Alish club that was less expensive than others in the city. Here in Moscow, too many young Kyrgyz guys finish work and so they have nothing to do: so they drink, smoke and they get in trouble. Instead, here you can practice your traditions and make yourself stronger.

Nubrek’s words position the club as a response to particular forms of boredom or alienation that working-class migrant existence in Moscow can engender, leading younger people to destructive or unsanctioned activities such as smoking or drinking. The club presents an alternative to these activities: the notion of “making yourself stronger.” This mission of promoting individual and collective physical strength is particularly salient in a context of widespread hate crimes against Central Asians in Moscow. Some of my Russian contacts, aside from amusement, also expressed worry about me going to the club. As one friend of mine believes, “those clubs are associated with the Kyrgyz mafia.” Such opinions show the stigma and suspicion that is met with the formation of “invisible” mono-ethnic institutions by marginalized communities.

Far from being totally invisible, the club often seeks to showcase its activities. It does this in its publicly available broadcast on OK (which is geared towards a diasporic audience), as well

as taking part in numerous public tournaments. Some tournaments, like those held at Sabantuy, are geared towards showcasing their skills to a broader audience. In these settings, wrestling against opponents from other nationalities also brings in issues of pride and patriotism. Other tournaments are organized and attended exclusively by Moscow's Kyrgyz community. One such tournament, though I was not able to attend, took place in the massive Ismailovo Park, where a 19-year old member of the Alish Club, Sukhrab, received a Soviet-era Lada car for winning the tournament. When I asked Sukhrab about his intentions with the car, he told me that he planned to sell it and send the money back to his family in Kyrgystan. Sukhrab didn't have a license, and paying taxes, gas and parking in expensive and traffic-filled Moscow would be more of a financial burden than anything else.

The Alish Club, while seen as ethnically marked and suspicious by many Russians and positioned as a trait of a "parallel society" can be better understood when seen in Nancy Fraser's conception of a "subaltern counter public." According to Fraser, this refers to a "parallel discursive arena, where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter discourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs" (Fraser 1997, 81). While not laying a coherently articulated political claim to the city, it is clear that the Alish Club functioned, in Fraser's words, as male working-class Kyrgyz space of "withdrawal and regroupment," while also serving as a "training ground towards agitational activities directed towards wider publics" (1997, 82).

As other researchers on migrant sports clubs in Europe have found, having separate sports clubs has shown to be positively correlated with feelings of inclusion and solidarity for members of ethnic minorities. Such associations also help members gain social capital while learning about specific realities and strategies of living as an ethnic minority in a given city,

information that is helpful for newly arrived members of cities (Theeboom 2012; Janssens and Verweel 2014). Those findings are consistent with my observations and the responses of my subjects that suggested the club's social and psychological utility. It was clear that the participants in the club were comfortable performing their working-class, Muscovite-Kyrgyz habitus in a collective environment where cultural traits familiar to them (Bourdieu 1979). What makes the Kyrgyz wrestling club unique is the combined nature of tradition, diaspora and self-defense that underlies the purpose of alish. The martial-art was continuously defined by the members of the club as a "tradition" and stable artifact of homeland rooted culture. Yet as my conversations with the alish club's members progressed, I found the social meaning of self-defined traditional activities are profoundly affected by processes of migration (Oparin 2017). Within the broader social "field" of Moscow, the community functions as a ritualized practice that creates, reproduces and stabilizes communal identity (Bourdieu 1984). The practices, far from being purely Kyrgyz or Muslim, take on a uniquely Muscovite form, creating a separate public and producing a social space to serve a diasporic community (Lefebvre 1992). Beyond community dimensions, the space functioned to promote and police a certain form of ethicized and religiosity sanctioned masculinity, as was shown by aspirations of individual strength and rules governing proper "Muslim" sports clothing. By broadcasting every training to show their training to family and prospective members, Nubrek engages in cross national performances for families at home and members of the Kyrgyz community in Moscow, digitally accessing diasporic networks. For an hour, three days a week, the gym space of an abandoned Orthodox church is transformed into a "counter space" that serves a "counter public" (Fraser 1990; Nicholls and Uitermark 2018). Within this alternative public, members simultaneously seek

physical strength to defend themselves while engaging in activities of ritualized collective and individual affirmation in the face of marginalization by dominant sectors in society and the city.

Conclusions: Group Identity and the Post-Socialist City

When I embarked on this thesis, my ideas about it were broad and I had a lot of questions: my main one being, “who exactly am I studying?” The categories of “migrant” and “Muslim” are broad and not mutually constitutive. Being in Muslim Muscovite spaces during Ramadan and seeing the season’s culmination during the Eid prayers began to lead me towards my current focus. The diverse Muslims I saw that morning were largely unified by a historical relationship to Russia: According to Dominic Rubin, Muslims in the Russian world occupy a “triple periphery,” as they are viewed as marginal to Russia, a country that is in turn viewed as marginal to the West, but also seen as marginal peoples in Muslim imaginaries, far away from the Arab constituencies that form the core of many imagined notions of the *ummah*. While the people who prayed on the street during that rainy July morning in Moscow were different from one another in a variety of ways, they were all standing there. Their millions of individual decisions to come to Moscow were mediated by historical connections and current economic realities. Once in the Russian capital, they become urban subjects who are incorporated into Moscow’s urban fabric by a complex set of economic, social and political patterns. Thus, a focus on Muslims from the former Soviet Union allowed me to study dynamics that are a product of a complex and unique layering of past and present.

Moscow’s development presents a different model of how processes of group identity play out in urban space from American and Western European cities. As I began to organize this research, a key question appeared: how then, in this special context, is group identity inscribed into urban space? My hope is that I have provided a descriptive and analytic path to better

understand the pasts, present and possible futures of practices and spatial inscriptions of Muslim Muscovite identities.

Summary of Main Findings

The conditions and practices that I witnessed in Moscow's post-socialist context call into question several axiomatic generalizations made by scholars who write about how migration and subaltern group identity interact with global cities.

In its current incarnation, the Russian state seeks to create categories of national belonging that are distinct from, yet familiar to, those of the Soviet project. Religion emerged as a key component of this pattern of nation-building. This tendency fits into the emergence of "post-secular" (or "post-atheist") national imaginaries as a distinctly post-socialist phenomenon. Moscow's urban space embodies these political and social developments: its physical landscape bears testament to its status as a "post-secular city" where public space is increasingly given religious significance by groups seeking to construct imaginaries of belonging along religious lines (Beaumont & Baker 2011; Habermas 2008; Weber 2011). As the contentious moment from Eid showed me, public space in Moscow holds important symbolic value that the Russian state seeks to control. Formal and semi-formal practices of policing and surveillance afford limited and closely monitored access to that space to groups on the periphery of the national imaginary. This dynamic stands in contrast to traditional framings of social conflicts between "unassimilated" Muslim populations and Western European states who view Muslim "public religiosity" as incompatible with secular European values (Brubaker 2013). This is a conflict of a different kind, which demonstrates the inadequacy of Russia's current social order for migrant

Muslims. Endemic to that order is both a lack of physical space for worship, and a void in representation in the discursive space in Russia's public "spiritual" sphere.

In Moscow, ethnic Russians use practices of control and racialization to police Muslim presence in public space. The leadership of the Muslim civil society groups that I encountered in the iftar tent and youth group respond to that racialization. Assimilated middle-class Muslims, often from dominant ethnicities (such as Tatar and Bashkirs), seek to practice politics of respectability: the discourses put forth by members of organizations like MosDUM reflect claims of belongingness to the Russian national project rooted in collective public practice of acceptable forms of "Russian" morality. While knowing their place as junior partners to the ethnic Russian majority, Tatar institutions seek to market Islam as a positive moral force in Russian society, stressing sobriety, patriotism, family values and hard work.

As anointed leaders of the Moscow *ummah*, Tatar-dominated groups decry instances of Muslim mistreatment by racist groups and the state, while excluding those most vulnerable to such mistreatment from leadership positions within institutionalized Muslim civil society. Thus, Tatar-dominated institutions simultaneously claim leadership over and distance themselves from the majority of Muslims in Moscow who are Central Asian and Caucasian migrants. These disjunctions occur while the anointed religious leadership of the Muslim community invokes the capital's *ummah* as an unproblematic category. These tendencies demonstrate the contradictions inherent in social processes of "reification" of group identity (Brubaker 2002). The presence of an influential Muslim stratum of society, with an institutionalized claim to being "native" to Russia that alienates the majority of its supposed constituency, warrants greater research and comparison to the dynamics of Muslim civil-society in the West. Another potential direction of research involves unsanctioned religious gatherings in Moscow. I was not able to ever see such

gatherings, though I was told of their existence by both researchers and believers who were frustrated with the exclusionary nature of the “legitimate” Mosques. Further studies are needed on the existence and specific appeal of informal religious congregations that meet in “profane” spaces, such as apartments and worksites.

In the context of multiple levels of exclusion from both Russian and Muslim society, my research at the Kyrgyz Alish Sports Club demonstrated how more grassroots-structured associations create spaces of “withdrawal and regroupment” for subaltern “counter publics” (Fraser 1997). Serving practical needs, the club functions as a space where resources are pooled, allowing the best fighters to win money or cars from their skills. Ethnic sports institutions also create the conditions for traditional practices from homeland rooted cultures to gain different meanings in the urban context: for many of the members of the club, alish allows for self-defense and a sense of ethnic pride in the face of widespread discrimination. The cultivation of identity in these contexts consists in a range of practices, including trainers and older members of the wrestling club watching over many of the younger men, policing their behavior and encouraging regular attendance to the club. There, members of the club are able to embody and circulate a practice of a specific notion of working class Kyrgyz masculinity. The physicality of masculinity when attached to martial arts seems to be a great source of contention in migrant Moscow: media reports of migrant fight clubs in Russia reflect racialized anxieties about the clubs as training grounds for crime and extremism. Conversely, collective masculine strength is seen as a point of ethnic pride among members of specific migrant ethnicities. Thus, the varied performances and perceptions of ethnic Muslim masculinities in Russian sports warrant greater investigation as a distinct cultural and discursive phenomenon.

The practices of creating sub-altern, collective identities and counter-publics are also apparent in other contexts of my study: ethnic concentration in the wholesale markets that I explored creates “economies of scale” for non-hegemonic group identities. Such economies allow for collective action and practices of belonging to take place. In those contexts, Muslim migrants find group validation in spaces of congregation around niche-consumption. Storekeepers like Amir gain notions of “productive citizenship” that are at odds with dominant categories of ethnic belonging. Tajik porters such as Afshin participate in group actions that assert collective anger at shared conditions of mistreatment by market authorities. Broadly, the Russian media reports such instances as evidence of the “problem” of migration: the unassimilable nature of migrants and their unassailable “difference” from ethnic Russians. Such racialized discourses reify narratives of social distance between Russians and migrants that lack any basis in fact, given the shared past of Russians and migrants and their constant interactions in the realm of daily life.

We see that despite racialized imaginaries propagated by the Russian media and Muscovites that characterize the markets as solely “black” migrant spaces, the preponderance of Russian working and middle-class customers shows that the markets also function as spaces of encounter, where both ethnic Russians and migrants encounter and normalize ethnic and religious difference in their mundane lives. Of course, not all such manifestations of group identity, solidarity or connection are utopian or even progressive by any degree: they are the product of subaltern subjects negotiating extremely stringent economic and political circumstances, making sense of those circumstances and asserting individual and group-based notions of interest. Thus, the encounter and multi-nationality that exists in the market are

mediated through the capitalist relations of power and methods of differential control that the markets' spaces maintain.

Beyond practices of collective and individual agency, the wholesale markets that I studied function as spaces where extreme practices of categorization and racialization take place. As shown earlier, low-skilled porters are numbered, surveilled and harassed by market authorities. Ostensible efforts to create a "clean" image for markets leads to practices of extreme categorization. The perceived racial status of porters as "black" vis-a-vis guards and ethnic Russians helps naturalize essentialized notions of racial difference based on group participation in low-paying unskilled labor. The social dynamics in "migrant" markets also underscore how patterns of migration and labor-market differentiation brought by capitalist transition have enabled practices and ideologies of racialization to categorized diverse Muslim ethnicities under epithets such as "black" and "guestworker" (Zakharov 2015). The racialization of labor and commercial space allows us to better understand how race interacts with urban space given the generalized absence of residential racial segregation in Moscow. In visually categorizing migrants and numbering them, market authorities ameliorate Russian fears of migrant assertion on public space. As center and periphery grow closer, those fears may only grow unless new discourses of belonging emerge, discourses that acknowledge a shared history and present, and shared belongingness to the everyday dynamics that shape Muscovite life.

Publics, Urban Marginality and Post-Soviet Legacies

As Chapter 2 shows, migrant Moscow developed along the lines of transnational migratory and economic networks that developed as a legacy of the Soviet collapse. Moscow's centrality, before as a capital of the socialist project, now as a center of regional wealth and a global city, grew more entrenched. This rapid concentration of post-Soviet wealth coincided with

the continued relative impoverishment of peripheral Soviet Republics. The former Soviet citizens of those countries found new national borders further dividing them from members of other ethnic groups who used to be co-citizens. While borders sprang up and regional inequalities become even more entrenched, many of the Soviet linguistic, cultural and transportation networks endured. Initially, migration networks reversed and the post-Soviet sphere became less diverse as people returned to their “homelands” in response to unpredictable political situations. Yet, as ethnic Russians left the former republics and returned home, so did many titular nationals of those former republics, driven by the invisible hand of the market and arriving in never-before-seen numbers to the core of the post-Soviet world.

Small-scale practices of economic informality that addressed shortages in the visibly-planned Soviet economy gave way to massive capitalist accumulation as central-planning crumbled. Members of the Soviet-era nomenklatura found themselves favorably-placed and maneuvered themselves to the center of newly privatized networks of production and distribution. As in the case of God Nisanov and Zarakh Iliev, owners of the Moscow and Gardener markets, the process of capital accumulation in the hands of few was integral to developing the conditions of inequality and unmet consumer demand for cheap goods that led to the flourishing of the shuttle economy. The labor-market differentiation of this transition interacted with primordial notions of belonging and citizenship that were cultivated during the socialist project. In the present neo-liberal capitalist period, conceptions of group differences among post-Soviet citizens were not only naturalized through narratives of land, national art and primordia, but were also driven by ethnic differentiation in the division of labor and perceptions of racialized social classes. Capitalism’s division of labor in this context works to create racialized migrant subjects who are interpellated as “black” due to discourses that associate their

very bodies with petty trading and menial labor (Sahadeo 2015). Segmented and differentiated workplace integration and commercial interaction allows for the limited generation of solidarities and episodic moments of class consciousness. An example of the emergence of such consciousness can be seen in the porters who mobilized in response to Navruz Zakirov's beating. Assumptions of "parallel cities" need to account for non-economic points of contact and isolation between dominant and marginal actors as a contingent set of practices that are affected by class status, political institutionalization and racialization.

The dynamics of belonging and exclusion play out, in Serguei Oushakine's words, in the context of a "post-soviet biopolitics" as a maintenance mechanism by Russian social actors interested in creating boundaries around an imagined public space. Within these practices, migrants are constituted into society as other in dominant discourse and made easier to control and administer as social exceptions (Agamben 2005; Oushakine 2008). Some migrants contest exclusion by rhetorically asserting their belonging as "Soviet-citizens" explicitly acknowledging the contradictions in Russian practices of racism and exclusion. The generational aspect of those contestations requires more research, as older respondents generally expressed stronger connections to the "Soviet" sphere, whereas many of the younger people whom I spoke to generally assume belonging to ethnic networks as well as globalized identities of consumption and popular culture. The settings in which each of these contestations take place are key: they constitute daily life as a materialization of historical forces, and mediate the availability of the tools to for subjects to imagine and create alternative futures.

So how is ethnic presence spatially inscribed in this context? The Muslim migrant population of Moscow continue to leave their mark on the city and etch out places for themselves in the sprawling metropolis. Returning to Saskia Sassen's notion of "presence" asserts how the

powerless make history; migrant workers pour the concrete to create Moscow's new capitalist skyscrapers and are on the front lines of Russia's encounter with the material goods of globalization. They are the "hewers of wood and drawers of water" who perform the foundational work for Russia's entrance into Market civilization. Many of them find themselves in precarious situations: they are racialized, exploited and discriminated against and respond to those situations in varied ways. They find self-validation through a variety of group practices and make sense of their situations through the discursive tools of the past and present. Their existence in the city brings Russians into contact with the legacy of their imperial past and forces them to contend with living in the presence of difference. Those responses to encountering difference are often regressive, violent and unjust. Emphasizing their difference from Russians does not do justice to their stories; they are Muscovites plain and simple, and any vision for the future of the city must take them into account as full people deserving a full right to the city and its spaces. As the man whom I spoke to during Eid said, "we are here."

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