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POST-SOVIET TRANSNATIONAL URBAN COMMUNITIES: INSTITUTIONS, NETWORKS AND DISCOURSES

Abstract

Large groups of emigrants have been leaving former Soviet space since the late 1980s and during almost the entire post-Soviet period, heading for the different EU countries for permanent residence. This wave of emigration led to an increase in the number of so-called Russian-speaking communities in these countries. In the past few years, processes of construction of the transnational urban communities among emigrants from the post-Soviet area have been of an increasingly greater topicality. Now translocal networks emerge too. Thus the paper is focused on the process of transnationalization and translocalization of the post-Soviet Russian-speaking urban communities by the example of Odessites, Leningraders/St. Petersburgers[1] and Bakuvians. The main goal was to understand, explain and describe this process.

Introduction

When studying the specific features of the post-Soviet urban communities (such as *Odessites, Leningraders and Bakuvians*), whose members are united by a common memory of their daily life in their towns of origin (Odessa, Leningrad/today St. Petersburg and Baku), it necessary to focus on the very process and practices of their construction (discursive and institutional ones). And also on the process and history of the emergence, and goals behind the construction of urban emigrant clubs as transnational institutions that constitute these communities in emigration. It is important to understand who those people who create city clubs, what meaning they put into their activities, how it is possible to describe those boundaries within the framework of which the natives of Odessa, St. Petersburg and Baku unite and reconstruct urban identity in emigration.

In the context of this approach, I rejected the tradition of studying emigrant and diaspora communities from the perspective of the country of origin and receiving state.[2] For my informants, local urban identity has a far greater attractiveness, strength and significance than identification with the country of origin or the receiving country or a "historical motherland".

An approach based on this perspective makes me look for answers to questions that are not directly linked to the phenomena of diaspora communities. What is so special about those towns within the spaces of which fairly stable community can form? Why are there relatively few (not more than a dozen) towns in the post-Soviet area, natives of which construct stable, to some extent or another, group boundaries and trans-national networks?

I think that these communities can be described as *post-Soviet transnational urban imagined communities.* No doubt, in order to describe these groups all of the factors listed are important: their common soviet past, the Russian language, and their own vision of the phenomenon of ethnicity. But the most important factor that defines the specifics of these communities is the town in which they were born and socialized. I.e. the specifics of these communities are defined by the specifics of their towns of origin. Urbanization in the Russian Empire was slow. Odessa, Baku, and, certainly, the capital of the empire – Petersburg (called Leningrad in Soviet years) were special towns. They were islands of urban space in the large sea of the rural population of the Empire and the few financial, industrial and cultural centres of the enormous empires (Russian and then Soviet).

Therefore, my research will be dealing with imperial towns, i.e. centres of urban life which were created within the framework of the development of the Russian and Soviet empires and with the aim of servicing imperial goals and requirements. All these towns with their present-day looks are the result of the imperial planning and colonization of lands over which the Russian and then the Soviet empires extended their control.[3] However, they were not colonial towns in the sense that we see this in other European empires of that time (Portuguese, French or British). They became even less colonial in the course of the implementation of Soviet national policy.

Transnational urban communities

So, I have identified three urban communities for my research: the Odessites, the Leningraders and the Bakuvians. The selection of these

three clubs presumed a comparative analysis making it possible to describe in a clearer way the specific features of the origin of the communities of Odessites, Leningraders and Bakuvians, to have a better vision of not only common features that these processes have but also the specifics of each individual case, and in this way to focus on the internal diversity of the largely similar processes of construction of post-Soviet transnational urban communities. I.e. also on what makes them different and on the specific features that are common and unite the processes of the construction of those communities.

Each of the three cities within the space of which these communities, which have been transformed into transnational ones in the past 20 years, were constructed, have their own imperial and post-imperial "zest". All of these cities were very well-known (special) in the Russian Empire and in the USSR, but for different reasons. The population of these cities – the result of the imperial expansion – was noticeably diverse from an ethnic point of view. People that lived in those cities actively emigrated during the collapse of the Soviet Union and in the post-Soviet period, also owing to the major Jewish communities that settled down in them in the late 19th century – early 20th century.

Urban communities in the context of diasporal discourse

To what Brubaker said I should, however, add that *when we talk about ethnicity* we often also talk about diasporas in categories of "groupism". In the past 20 years, the popularity of the term diaspora kept growing (Brubaker 2005: 1-2; Kosmarskaya 2011: 56-57). It is primarily the Jewish diaspora that is described in categories of diasporaness and groups more often than others. The transformation of the soviet urban communities of Odessa, Leningrad and Baku into post-Soviet transnational ones is caused to a considerable extent (but not completely) by the circumstance that ethnic Jews were a noticeable segment in these urban communities. In Berlin, the urban clubs themselves have also been organized within the framework of the city's Jewish community which provides resources necessary for it to exist. Therefore I should be talking about a direct link between the transnational urban communities of Odessites, Bakuvians, and Leningraders and the Jewish diaspora. At the same time, also described in categories of the diasporal discourse are ethnic Russians, Ukrainians, Azeris, and other emigrants from the post-Soviet area.[4] Many of them

participate in the construction of the transnational communities of Odessites, Leningraders or Bakuvians. So, although the communities I have studied are not reducible to any one ethnic diaspora, diasporal discourse and theory are important to understand their specifics.

All of my informants are ascriptively described as members of various ethno-national diasporas, mainly the Jewish diaspora, while most others – Russian, Ukrainian or Azeri. Many of my informants also consider themselves members of different diasporas. Literally different. A Bakuvian or Leningrader may be members (or even activists) of two diasporas at the same time. In the first case, the Azeri and Jewish, and in the second – the Jewish and Russian. Almost any Odessite is comfortable as a representative of the Jewish and Ukrainian diasporas. For my informants, even a dual diasporal membership is often only symbolic. Many take part (often an active part) in events held by any post-Soviet diaspora if they are organized by people who are, like themselves, Russian-speaking emigrants from the former USSR. You may hear or read increasingly more often about separate diasporas of Odessites or Bakuvians existing.[5]

Certainly, the Jewish diaspora provides the essential resources that make it possible to set up emigrants' organizational institutes (urban clubs) within the framework of which transnational post-Soviet urban communities are reconstructed. But is that a sufficient basis to describe the communities of Oddesites, Bakuvians or Leningraders in diasporal categories? In my view, the example of the Jewish diaspora as a classical one is not relevant in this case. The Odessa, Petersburg/ Leningrad or Baku Jewish communities might be considered as one of those, the history of which does not always fit into the framework of "ideal type" of a Diaspora. Summarize all the foregoing, it should be noted, that it makes sense to focus on the analysis of local specificity of these Jewish communities. With such an approach an appeal to the image of the "ideal"/ "classical" diaspora is not helpful. In my opinion, it is more fruitful an attempt to justify the analysis of the specificity of these communities and their places in more wide city-communities from the perspective offered by Rogers Brubaker:

> Rather than speak of 'a diaspora' or 'the diaspora' as an entity, a bounded group, an ethno-demographic or ethno-cultural fact, it may be more fruitful, and certainly more precise, to speak of diasporic stances, projects, claims, idioms, practices, and so on. (Brubaker 2005: 13)

So, concerning the diasporal aspects, I am looking at the Jewish communities of Odessa, Petersburg/Leningrad and Baku from the perspective proposed by Brubaker, and also implying the turnover of forms and practices of the diasporization of the communities of Odessites, Leningraders and Bakuvians. The things that normally face diaspora researchers, such as links between country of origin or construction of diasporal structures, and preservation of culture and religion are not topical in these cases. At the same time, the diasporal specifics can also be observed in the case with these communities, especially in the aspects that have to do with their transnational and translocal nature.

Transnationality and Translocality

In a way, these two ideas can be viewed as mutually exclusive. But I prefer to talk about them as mutually complementing ones, as ones that make it possible to stress the specifics of transnational local links and networks that members of these communities construct, and also the styles of their imagination which are directly linked to a specific place in space, to a specific city. Idea one – transnationalism refers to nation states and, considering the specifics of the communities researched, to ethno-national diasporas as well.

To one or another extent, all of my informants identify themselves with a nation state and an imaginary community. That may be the now former soviet republic of Ukraine or Azerbaijan or the Russian Federation. That may be "historical motherland" – Israel, or their current motherland – the country where they are – Germany. In the context of these feelings and associations they construct transnational networks and spaces, which may imply «relatively stable, lasting and dense sets of ties reaching beyond and across the borders of sovereign states. They consist of combinations of ties and their contents, positions in networks and organizations, and networks of organizations that cut across the borders of at least two nation states» (Faist 2004: 3-4). I will actually be viewing urban club as such organizational networks.

It should also be stressed that "this term focuses on people and groups and do not necessary refer to official bodies" (Ben-Rafael & Sternberg 2009: 1). Not only migrants, but wider, residents of Odessa or Baku who did not go anywhere often strive to maintain such links and construct transnational spaces, using to this end their personal and/or group *social*

capital as a resource for constructing and maintaining wide and often very intensive contacts among members of the community scattered across many countries. Nina Glick Schiller proposes using the idea of "transnationalism" to describe these networks and spaces. When this is about "a social process in which migrants establish social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders". And here we have to talk about transmigrants, who "develop and maintain multiple relations - familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political - that span borders" (Schiller, et. al., 1992: ix). In the context of this approach, the process of construction of transnational networks and spaces can also be looked simultaneously on the local, national and global levels. Glick Schiller, for her part, proposes focusing on the process itself and social relations "rather than on culture, identity, or the 'functional' domains of integration within the particular nation-state" (Schiller & Cağlar 2008: 47).

In turn, the idea of *Translocality*, I think, expands the analytical framework and makes it possible to stress the particular attachment (real, symbolic or imaginary) to a specific place in space – the city of origin. The communities of Odessites, Bakuvians or Leningraders are constructed also as contra versa to national communities or ethno-national diasporas. They are larger than many frameworks in which national (ethnic, national, civic) communities are constituted. Simultaneously, they are associated with the more specific local space of one city. However, in the modern context, of importance is not only the presence in that city but activity within transnational networks. For emigrants, the city of origin is a *symbol city* or a *memory city* which in its present-day condition has increasingly less to do with the actual city they lived in. These symbols and memory are important not for preserving a certain urban community but for constructing some kind of a new transnational urban community. In their imagination all members of one community are attached to a specific place – a city. In their reality they are members of transnational networks and communities scattered across dozens of countries and cities. Ulrike Freitag and Achim von Oppen talking about traslocality underline that:

> Translocality as a research perspective [...] more generally aims at highlighting the fact that the interactions and connections between places, institutions, actors and concepts have far more diverse, and often even contradictory effects than is commonly assumed. (Freitag & Oppen 2010: 5)

This is the far more diverse situation, which is not reducible to categories of nation state and diasporas or (post)imperial identities, that we can observe in the case with the communities of Odessites, Bakuvians and Leningraders. It is also important to stress that the approach based on this perspective "also situates social actors in translocal and transnational networks as well as in the different local context in which they operate" (Ibid.: 6). These local contexts, in which united transnational communities of Odessites or Bakuvians are constructed, are, in turn, very diverse. The specifics of the process of the transnationalization of these communities have to do with their adaptation to these very different local urban contexts (one city of origin and many other cities of residence), which leave their imprint on the styles in which they are imagined.

The styles in which the post-Soviet city-communities are imagined

In his famous book "Imagined Communities" Benedict Anderson says: "Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/ genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined" (1998, p. 6). And although Anderson is more focused on describing political imagined communities (nations), his observation is valuable in other cases as well, including in the situation with the construction of transnational and translocal urban communities. My research actually aimed to understand *the style in which they are imagined*. Following Anderson I am also talking in categories of imagination and process of construction of the communities of Odessites, Leningraders and Bakuvians. In my view, the origin of this imagination should be sought in the second half of the 19th century, when these communities just only started to be constructed.

In the case with the communities of Odessites, Leningraders or Bakuvians, we are not talking about imaginary identities which are produced within the spaces of nation states. Certainly, members of the communities of Odessites or Leningraders or Bakuvians may be members of different national communities and take part, to a varying extent of activity, in mobilization projects implemented by Israel, Russia, Ukraine or Azerbaijan. However, while taking part in the activities of network-based transnational urban clubs, they end up outside the boundaries of those mobilization projects. These supra-national specifics also put over the different extents of participation in national projects. For example, the

Bakuvians are more linked with projects run by the Azerbaijani authorities than are Russians or Ukrainians with projects run by the authorities of Ukraine and Russia. Ethnic Jews are more connected with policies implemented by Israel than with Ukraine, Russia or Azerbaijan.

Effectively, speaking about urban communities, we can observe a competition between different projects for construction of imaginary communities. The authorities, in the shape of the Russian and soviet empires and in the shape of the nationalizing post-Soviet nation states, aspire to control and structuralize the life of urban communities. They view them as a component part of large projects for nation construction, aspire to create and maintain different kinds of boundaries – class and religious boundaries under the Russian empire, and cultural and ethnic ones in the years of soviet power and in modern post-Soviet successor states. In the past almost two centuries they have making tireless (albeit often inconsistent) attempts at attributing different kinds of identity to their citizens, and have aspired to construct and actually set styles of (self)imagination of communities and even styles of their everyday life.

These attempts are made with a varying extent of intensiveness and insistence. The soviet regime demonstrated a far greater will to exercise control over citizens' private life than any post-Soviet one. However, under all kinds of authorities and regimes, the inconsistent aspiration to structuralize the (religious, cultural, ethnic and other kinds of) diversity in line with one or another state objective and project, with simultaneous attempts at homogenizing the population (russification, sovietization, nationalization, etc) met with counteraction from "grass roots".

Major cities could actually be those islands where practices of "resistance" to state-run projects accumulated, where it was never possible to firmly set identities, boundaries, norms or rules of everyday behaviour which were imposed by the authorities, where imaginary communities not planned by the state were constructed and where identities and lifestyles imposed by the authorities were either ignored or were interpreted in a different way. Recalling the famous work of James Scott, I can say that when necessary, Odessites, Bakuvians or Leningraders *followed but did not obey the authorities* (Scott 1985). This disobedience did not carry an explicit or implicit underlying political message. No major and/or mass protests against the soviet authorities (especially in the post-war period) took place in those cities (Kozlov 2002). We are also not talking about dissidence as complete non-acceptance of the dominant power and ideology. Those are attempts at adapting to (or cautiously ignoring) the

categories of identity and behavioural norms imposed by the authorities that contradict the "normal" everyday life of the Odessites and Bakuvians. Sometimes, the authorities retreated. Sometimes, townspeople's behavioural norms adapted and changed. However, these imaginary communities were constructed in the context of a constant *game* that has gone on non-stop for the past 150 years between the authorities and Odessites or the authorities and Leningraders.

The normal everyday resistance could be expressed in very different ways – in the construction of urban place names in the city, which were not only different from the official ones but also ironized them; in a hidden (only among "our people") irony about people's compulsory participation in rallies held to mark yet another anniversary of the October Revolution or May Day; in the production of jokes and urban folklore songs; in clandestine parties with banned jazz; in the emergence of spaces within which "western" (or, as people said in the years of the USSR, "made by a firm") clothing; in the formation of people's own rules and norms of celebrating those events that townspeople deemed to be more important and topical than official state holidays; and, finally, in the thing that distinguishes these communities - in the construction of discursive boundaries of "our" communities (we are Odessites or we are Bakuvians) which were not planned within the framework of state policy; or, in another way, in the construction of their own imaginary communities different from those that the authorities tried to establish. These cities were (and remain, in a way) special. They were not like most other imperial or soviet cities. They were centres of culture, within the space of which numerous intellectuals and ordinary residents created languages for a (self-) description of their urban imaginary communities. These languages of (self-)description are widely used in literature, poetry, writing, and, finally in the everyday speak of residents of these cities. Every "true" Odessite or Bakuvian is fluent in this language (or discourse) of their home town, owing to their social capital and urban habitus.

Social Capital and Urban Habitus

Attempts to find concepts that could describe the post-Soviet urban transnational imagined communities lead to such categories as social capital and habitus. In my view, these concepts, as they are interpreted by Pierre Bourdieu, allow to conduct a nuanced analysis of the origin of

these communities. To understand the principles of membership in them. Finally, they will help to understand and describe the process of post-Soviet transformation of these communities.[6] By Pierre Bourdieu's definition:[7]

> Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group... (Bourdieu 1986: 248-249)[8]

It is the practical and steady state of both material and symbolic exchange that urban communities are in. They are assured of a common name originating from the name of a particular city and socially instituted. As for the post-Soviet situation, this relationship, which urban communities are based on, "also partially irreducible to objective relations of proximity in physical (geographical) space or even in economic and social space" (Ibid.: 249). Stable membership in networks of Odessa, Leningrad and Baku residents are determined by kindred (family), friendly and neighborly, or business (colleagues) relationships during the period (or at the moment) of staying in their hometown (i.e., in a specific geographical and physical space). Stability of the exchange relationships (material and symbolic) often is also linked to *initial* and *secondary socialization* of inhabitants living in one city (Berger & Luckmann 1969: 139-156). It is almost impossible to become a true "Odessite", "Leningrader" or "Bakuvian" without going through these periods of socialization. That is, the circumstances of socialization have an impact on the volume of the social capital of a specific Odessa, Leningrad and Baku resident, and can determine the "size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilize" (Bourdieu Ibid.: 249). In other words, the circumstances of socialization affect the size of a network, consisting of urban community members like him/her.

In the post-Soviet situation, membership in a group or networks is less connected with living in a particular physical space of the city. It is transformed into membership in emigrant clubs and, to some extent, into active involvement in a variety of transnational social networks. In a certain sense, clubs "Odessites", "Leningraders" or "Bakuvians" are transformed into clubs for the select few. For those, who have the necessary social capital. But in such a case, family and business relationships often do not seem to play a decisive role anymore. New networks and groups often based on friendly relationships are built. Social capital which is required

for membership in "the clubs for the select few" becomes a common memory of their native city.

It is not just by chance that these clubs are formed in a period when Odessa, Leningrad and Baku residents come into a mass movement. In 1990-1991, when the population of these cities actively emigrate. When the size of the network of connections begins to decrease rapidly. And the decrease is observed in the *hometown* in the first place. Therefore, the city clubs are first set up in Odessa, Baku and Leningrad. And only after a period of time, when it becomes possible to mobilize a new network of connections and to form new groups, in which membership is defined by the common memory of the hometown and experience of emigration - Odessa or Baku city clubs (as institutions constituting these groups in a new situation) are set up in different cities of their current residence. Gradually the transnationalization of these networks and clubs takes place - they are transformed into 'worldwide' or *global*.[9]

The benefit of membership in these clubs and transnational networks is an opportunity to participate in the construction of Odessites', Leningraders'/Petersburgers' and Bakuvians' "islets" worldwide. The right to live on these islets for anyone, who has the necessary social capital, determines intergroup solidarity. But this solidarity and membership in groups does not imply their internal homogeneity and opacity of limits. These islets are no longer only for city natives, for the "genuine" Odessites or Bakuvians. In the transnational space, Bakuvians, Odessites and Leningraders/Petersburgers are neighbors, who meet each other and establish friendly relations (or even familial) much more frequently than it was possible in their previous life within the boundaries of a particular physical space. In their hometowns. This neighborhood and frequent meetings, on the one hand, seem to blur the boundaries of imaginary urban communities. All of them (Odessites, Petersburgers and Bakuvians) are emigrants from the former Soviet space. But, on the other hand, this experience leads to more clear understanding of the difference among them. And finally, to the cultivation of this diversity or intergroup boundaries. Each islet is not lost in a vast ocean of migrants. They form an archipelago. Residents of separate islets travel amongst them. They enter into a different kind of relationships with the islanders from other islets. Construct networks based on friendship and kinship. They are often in a fairly steady state of material and symbolic exchange. All the inhabitants of the archipelago have even a common name: they are all former Soviet people – "homo soveticus".

But, at the same time, they are different. And experience of traveling amongst different islets created by migrants support this diversity. According to Bourdieu, "Manners (bearing, pronunciation, etc.) May be included in social capital insofar as, through the mode of acquisition they point to, they indicate initial membership of a more or less prestigious group" (Ibid.: 256). The difference in manners, a view of themselves, a way to pronounce the same Russian words, to combine them in different ways, sometimes even to put different meanings to the same words, becomes distinct when living in emigration.

And precisely after most of "the genuine Odessites" or "genuine Bakuvians" left their hometowns with their own manners and accent, the difference between the remained ("rooted city-dwellers") and new migrants in Odessa or St. Petersburg, in turn, becomes even more evident. In this situation of the dispersion that cannot be avoided even with staying in the hometown membership in the group is inevitably perceived as more prestigious. The smaller groups of Odessites or Bakuvians are and the more difficult it is to construct them in a situation of global scattering, the higher their status.

Most migrants, who consider themselves to be Odessites, Leningraders or Bakuvians, are middle-aged and older people – forty-year-old and older. It is too late for them to change their manners and pronunciation. They feel comfortable among emigrants, who came like them from the former Soviet space. In a Russian speaking environment. But this environment is very diverse and heterogeneous. And each of emigrants tries to find or create his/her own group or social network in this heterogeneity. Perceiving these efforts as the desire to restore the usual circle of acquaintances, a comfortable social and cultural atmosphere. Just being around Odessites or Bakuvians like him/her, a migrant from these cities feels really comfortable.

All of them are Odessites or Bakuvians also because they have the right to membership in the groups set up by emigrants from these cities. Or, in other words, they all have social capital required for this membership. They all speak the same language, laugh at the same jokes, listen to the same music, dress in a similar style and prefer a similar range of foods. They all have something to remember. And these memories fill their daily emigrant lives with positive emotions and meaning when they have someone to share them, when there is someone with whom they can discuss the news from their hometown. Memories unite them. These newly established emigrant ties and relationships "are is a product of an

endless effort at institution". And these new (transnational and translocal) networks of connections:

> the network of relationships is the product of investment strategies, individual or collective, consciously or unconsciously aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships that are directly usable in the short or long term. (Ibid.: 249)

Casual contacts among emigrants from Odessa, Baku and Leningrad often degenerate "into relationships that are at once necessary and elective, implying durable obligations subjectively felt (feelings of gratitude, respect, friendship, etc.)" (Ibid.: 249-50). Of course, these relationships may be competitive or even hostile. But these negative relations also take on special significance when established among fellow-townsmen. Emigrants from the same city. This exchange of signs of recognition, respect or competition for status in the group re-produces the group "through the mutual recognition and the recognition of group membership which it implies" (Ibid.: 250).

Rivalry can occur over access to the leadership of the city clubs. However, emergence of these clubs enables to create and maintain "more or less institutionalized forms of delegation" of certain rights to represent emigrants from Odessa or Baku by "small group of agents" (Ibid.: 251). Often these are people more or less known in their communities, who obtain these authorities due to their social capital. These people are usually the intellectuals, activists who are ready to spend their time organizing institutions (clubs) and collective events. Among them may be those whose name was known among townsmen even before emigration. Or even people known in the whole former Soviet space. As president of the Worldwide Club of Odessites Mikhail Zhvanetski, a popular artist and satirist. Or the president of the Worldwide Club of Petersburgers, a famous scientist and director of the Hermitage, the most recognizable Russian Museum in the world, Michael Piotrowski. And in this case the name of the president enables to concentrate social capital within the club. Gives the club a certain weight and/or popularity.

Positions of emigrant club activists and leaders are directly dependent on their achievements over the years of living in their hometown. The more significant their social capital was, the more likely that they would be recognized and/or identified by the largest possible number of emigrants from the same city. The greater their chances of being invited to the

structures that manage the city clubs. This position of a social agent in a network or in a group is also defined by his urban habitus:

> systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adopted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. (Bourdieu 1990: 53)

Habitus of Odessites, Leningraders or Bakuvians generated by the urban environment, where they were born and lived a significant (or even the most part of their life) determines a similar style of behavior interiorized by these people. More often not reflecting about this style, they demonstrate it in a manner of communication or behavioral habits. Habitus of Odessites, Bakuvians or Leningraders, as a system of firmly acquired dispositions, reproduces rules of behavior that they followed in their hometown when living in emigration. Urban habitus enables to reproduce structures of collective solidarity in the transnational space. It is similar "habitus as social space, as a sense of one's place and a sense of the other's place" (Hiller & Rooksby 2002: 1) that allows emigrant Odessites, Leningraders and Bakuvians to know each other. One can say that urban habitus in this context acts as a form of social capital (Ibid.). Only a "genuine" Bakuvian and Odessite can have this special social capital (or urban habitus). That is, one who was born and socialized in the city. And more importantly, whom the other members of a group or network accept as one who belongs here.[10]

"Habitus is thus a sense of one's (and other's) place and role in the world of one's lived environment. [...] habitus is an embodied, as well as a cognitive, sense of place" (Ibid.: 5). As for Odessa, Leningrad and Baku communities, this place is their hometown. Thus, it makes sense to talk in terms of urban habitus. The focus on different cities of origin allows talking about habitus that distinguishes the Odessites from the Bakuvians. Dispositions acquired through living in the space of the same city - that is, the focus on one city – enable to talk about a similar urban habitus. It is important that all members of a group or network have similar habitus. At the same time, they may differ in their social capital. Or in the degree of its concentration. Urban habitus makes for the presence of the past experience of socialization within the urban community in the present.

This experience is re-actualized in the new situation of emigration. Both social capital and urban habitus ensure membership in the urban community and in the situation of dispersion.

In principle, all the Odessites and Bakuvians can be members of the club or be active in transnational networks. But not all are involved in the construction of discourses of Odessites or Bakuvians, or participate in the creation and management of clubs. Intellectuals are generally involved in these processes. And specificity of these communities is largely determined by the high number of Leningraders, Odessites and Bakuvians who have not only similar urban habitus, but also cultural capital of intellectuals. The transnationalization process of Odessites' or Petersburgers' network institutions (i.e. networks of urban clubs) may be considered as an intellectual movement.

Thus, I consider a similar urban habitus, as a product of the history of the construction of these communities that allows to carry out collective practices and to maintain solidarity and social capital as sustainable membership in a group, to be a broad categorical framework enabling to understand and to describe the post-Soviet transnational urban communities. When talking about the special position of social agents, who, in addition to a similar urban habitus and social capital, also have the necessary cultural capital (intellectuals), I focus on a concrete specificity that should be considered in the context of a broad categorical framework.

The only question remains, how much the category 'urban habitus' which refers to the idea of attachment to a certain place can help to describe the process of rapid transnationalization of urban (local) communities. Pierre Bourdieu and Loic Wacquant state that:

> Habitus is not a fate that some people read into it. Being the product of history, it is an *open system of dispositions* that is constantly subjected to experiences, and therefore constantly affected by them in a way that either reinforces or modifies its structures. (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 133)

As for the post-Soviet urban communities, we can see how the new dispersion situation forces to look for ways to form new structures, using resources that members of these communities have. Under the new conditions, social capital and urban habitus are those resources that allow reconstructing solidarity groups and networks in a transnational space. In his last work on this topic Bourdieu tries to answer the question of the applicability of the concept of habitus to our fast changing world. He

develops the thesis that habitus should be described as sufficiently open and volatile form of experience and behavior:

> the habitus is not something natural, inborn: being a product of history, that is of social experience and education, it may changed by history, that is by new experiences, education or training. (Bourdieu 2002: 29).

Building the network of urban clubs is some kind of response to the new experience gained by Leningraders, Odessites or Bakuvians in the dispersion situation. This is a way of organizing (or structuring) the formerly local community as a transnational network of institutions – clubs. A way of organizing the daily life of emigrants that allows them to create islets of Odessites, Bakuvians and Leningraders worldwide. Their social capital and urban habitus acquired in a specific geographic space give strength and stability to the post-Soviet transnational networks and groups. And the new experience gained when living in emigration enables to use Diaspora resources or capabilities of modern electronic media systems and fast travel to construct a new type of community.

Urban communities and the work of imagination

The daily "work of imagination" of ordinary Odessites, Leningraders/ Petersburgers and Bakuvians dispersed through the countries and cities that, according to Arjun Appadurai, draws resources in modern electronic media, among other things, allows reconstructing these communities in the transnational space. Loss of locality in exchange for globality is symbolically reflected in the name of institutions created for constituting these 'old' communities in their new, present situation. This is surely the Worldwide Club of Odessites - the most globalized of all post-Soviet local urban communities. And, of course, the *Worldwide* Club of Petersburgers, or a little more modest the International Cultural Club "Bakinets".

Appadurai's statement that "few persons in the world today do not have a friend, relative, or coworker who is not on the road to somewhere else or already coming back home, bearing stories and possibilities (Ibid.: 4) is directly related to natives of those cities. A high level of mobility is one of the features of these communities. Jews and their families, using the resource of ethnicity, were actively migrating from these cities in the 1970s. Since 1989, this immigration grows massive.[11] Such often-repeated

phrases of different people as "there are almost no 'geniune' Bakuvians or 'geniune' Leningraders/Petersburgers" reflect this tendency of rapid global scattering. According to Zhvanetski, who finds the most accurate metaphors to describe these urban communities:[12] "the Odessites are smeared in a thin layer on the globe." The "genuine" Odessites living in Berlin or Los Angeles increasingly watch movies and listen to music glorifying their hometown. They discuss TV shows about Odessa, being away from it. They have their own websites, social networks and online forums. News, newspapers, and books telling about their native city are also widely available through electronic media. As for the Odessites or Bakuvians, we see that, according to Appadurai, "moving images meet deteretorialized viewers" (2005: 3-4).

Members of each of these urban communities consider it unique and there is no doubt that they are. But each of these unique communities has found itself in a very similar situation of rapid scattering of its members. With the subsequent creation of new social networks and institutions to reconstruct urban communities in their present transnational and translocal form. The loss of normal daily routine, which consisted of a complex web of social connections and relationships (family, friendly, official, etc.) was made up in the 2000s with construction of new transnational networks. Relationships among relatives and neighbors, classmates and fellow students, friends and colleagues, which were broken or lost during the process of immigration, are restored. It is possible due to the rapid development of social networks and electronic media.

The modern communication capabilities, rapid dissemination of news and information enable to create conditions under which the mass immigration leads to no less mass process of building new transnational social networks and various groups.[13] Communities of peoples from the same city that are reconstructed in these networks and groups can be described in different terms with the prefix "trans". They consist not only of transnational families,[14] but also transnational groups of former classmates or colleagues. It can be *trans*neighbourly and *trans*friendly groups. Experience which is a basis of the desire to construct various *trans*groups can be very different. But, in the end, it is about people socialized in the same environment. And if this environment produced people with a particular urban habitus, they easily find ways and reasons to build bridges among different *trans*groups of classmates or former neighbors from among the Odessites and Bakuvians living in immigration.

Paraphrased Appadurai slightly, we can say that when dealing with the construction of transnational and translocal groups and networks of Odessites or Bakuvians, we have a collective work of imagination, which "can become a fuel for action" (Ibid.: 7). Focusing on the aspect of the collective imagination, these communities can be described as a kind of a *community of sentiment* - "a group that begins to imagine and feel things together" (Ibid.: 8). Referring after Appadurai to the thesis of Benedict Anderson, we can say that all members of the Odessan and Baku communities communities could not have been familiar with each other. However, production of different kinds of texts (printed narratives), played a major role in the creation of these communities. City newspapers, including their modern online versions, political essays (including memoirs), novels and poetry, and finally, radio, movies and TV programs contributed to the creation of this imagined community. To the formation of an urban habitus. Unlike communities of sentiment described by Appadurai, the post-Soviet urban communities are no *less*, but *more* "subject to collectively shared criteria of pleasure, taste, or mutual relevance". But "Most important", that "these sodalities are often transnational, even postnational, and they frequently operate beyond the boundaries of the nation" (Ibid.).

Conclusion

Since 1989 and then throughout the 1990s, when the mass immigration of residents from these cities continued, contacts had been maintained and re-established only on the basis of social capital and urban habitus. Migrants built up, step by step, new communication and acquaintance networks in the new cities, where they have moved to. They tried to maintain relationships with family and close friends who remained in their hometown. These relationships were not originally transnational in varying degrees of intensity. But communication capabilities, expanding gradually due to the Internet, lead to actualization of these contacts. They [communication capabilities] make these relationships and contacts virtual but daily. Odessites and Bakuvians begin actively seeking their old friends and classmates, many of whom they have not seen for many years. Contacts cannot only be restored but even expanded. New groups and networks are built. City clubs are created.

Of course, as for my research, it is about the first-generation immigrants. About the people in the middle and older age groups. About those who socialized in Odessa, Baku and Leningrad/St.Petersburg. That is, at least, about those who studied in senior high school, and only after immigrated. About people whose personal memory connects them with the cities of origin. Now it is difficult to predict what the situation with the second and especially the third generation of Odessite and Bakuvian immigrants will be. This is a question of another study. According to the stories of my informants, I can only say that their children (especially those who were born and raised in emigration) show much less interest to participate in networks and clubs of Odessites and Bakuvians.

In the words of Appadurai, communities of Odessites, Bakuvians and Leningraders/Petersburgers appropriate "the materials of modernity differently". And the transformation of these communities in the past twenty years can be considered as an impressive example of "how locality emerges [or reconstructed] in a globalizing forms" and "how global facts take local form" (Ibid., p. 15, 17-18). According to Appadurai: "Diasporic public spheres, diverse among themselves, are the crucibles of a postnational political order" (Ibid.: 22). Transnational and translocal post-Soviet urban communities, which are similar to these *diasporic public spheres,*[15] are one of the most impressive examples supporting the fact "that the nation-state, as a complex modern political form, is on its last legs" (Ibid.: 19). And, at the same time, one of the most interesting socio-cultural phenomena of the emerging postnational political order.

NOTES

[1]   I will often use two self-designations at the same time. The simplest explanation is that the city's name has been changed, and, along with it, the name of the communities. But this issue is more complicated and is connected with the change of epochs (from imperial to Soviet and post-Soviet). Much depends on the specific of social and cultural contexts in which a narrator tells his or her life story. The vast majority of my informants often use these names as synonyms, which I will often allow myself. At the same time, the simultaneous use of two names often allows emphasizing the differences in urban discourses. Unlike Odessites and Bakuvians, in the case of Leningraders / Petersburgers, the changes of the city's and community's name are a constant reminder of the connection and discontinuity of the epochs reflected in one biographical narrative.

[2]   I reacted the approach which is described in a number of influential theoretical works on the problem of diaspora (see: Safran 1991; Clifford 1994; Sheffer 2003; Cohen 2008).

[3]   All of the three cities were not "core area of the Russian empire" (see: Gorizontov).

[4]   The term "diaspora" is widely used in mass media, political discourses in the post-Soviet area and also in academic texts (see Kolstoe 1995; Laitin 1998; Braun 2000; Satzewich 2002; Rumyantsev 2010; Kosmarskaya 2011).

[5]   Leningraders/Petersburgers, who do not think about themselves in categories of diaspora.

[6]   Researchers often use these categories to describe urban communities, when the transnationalization of a population takes place in their home towns. Links between social capital of urban dwellers and urbanism, or habitus and urbanism. Most often, such works tell about cities in Western Europe and the United States. See, for example: (Dilworth, Ed., 2006; Dirksmeier 2009).

[7]   There are different social capital theories. However, as Elinor Ostrom rightly said: "Almost all reflect two basic assumptions: social capital is a resource that is available to members of a social network, and social structure is often the type of capital that all members of a group can access to promote their interests" (Ostrom 2009: 17). I think that the both approaches which are valuable for describing the post Soviet transnational urban communities are reflected to the full extent in the Bourdieu's theory. Thus an appeal to other theoretical conceptions of the social capital is unnecessary. More about other approaches see: (Fine 2010; Häuberer 2011).

[8]   Or as John Field tried to sum up the concept of social capital: "Its central thesis can be summed up in two words: relationship matter. […] Membership of networks, and a set of shared values, are at the heart of the concept of social capital" (Field 2003: 1, 3).

9   Active emigration of ethnic Jews from these cities started as far back as 1970s. Any networks or communities (expatriate associations) are likely to have appeared before the collapse of the Soviet Union.

10   For a detailed definition of the category 'habitus' see also: (Krais & Gebauer 2002).

11   As Larissa Remennick describes these events: "Soviet Jews became effectively the only ethnic group granted the exceptional privilege of mass emigration from the Soviet Empire under the pretext of return to their historic homeland of Israel. Between 1971 and 1981, around 250,000 Jews left the USSR […] Since 1988, well over 1.6 million Jews from Russia, Ukraine, and other Soviet successor states have emigrated to Israel, the U.S., Canada, Germany, Australia, and a few other Western countries" (Remennick 2007, p. 3-4). These figures include family members who are not ethnic Jews.

12   And, of course, first of all the community to which the satirist belongs - Odessan.

13   One of the most exciting projects implemented in the former Soviet space is the social networking service 'Odnoklassniki' ('Classmates').

14   See, for example: (Goulbourne, et. al., 2010: 3-15).

15   Representing, at the same time, the socio-cultural phenomenon that does not fit entirely within such spheres.

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