

Carried by Migrants– Frictions of Migration and Mobility Patterns in the Conflicting Assemblage of the Russian Private Transport Sector

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Abstract

It is well known that labor migrants from different countries all over the Eurasian Union are the backbone of crucial economy sectors in the Russian Federation as, inter alia, construction, agriculture or trade. This article deals with another less mentioned but similarly significant labor market, which substantially changed its assemblage during the last couple of years, namely commercial urban transport services. In the last two decades, the *marshrutka* sector underwent major reforms and formalization processes that, on the one hand, brought operators back into the tax net and ensured a certain extension of control to the local transportation departments but, on the other hand, worsened the labor conditions of the transportation workers. Drawing from the empirical evidence of my fieldwork in southern Russia, I describe currently problematized mobility assemblages and embed the actor's articulations in broader conflicts within the *marshrutka* business and transportation regulation policy. I further analyze how labor migrants have been forced to accept unfavorable working conditions in the enterprises as a direct result of politically triggered reforms in the *marshrutka* business. The paper provides insights into the social arena of the *marshrutka*, which serves as a societal encounter of urban conflicts and transformation mirroring (un-)intended effects of the local transportation reformation attempts.

Keywords

labor migration – *marshrutka* – Russian Federation – translocality – transnational identity – public transport policy – urban mobility

1 Introduction

Journalist Sergey Prudnikov starts one of his articles about current *marshrutka* reforms with the following quote: “Migrant drivers are bugging everyone. They do not know the city, they drive like crazy, and they do not even speak Russian.”¹ If only *marshrutkas* were driven by Russian citizens, the argument continues, there wouldn’t be major problems. Other journalists argue that it is exactly the grey business structure of a still informalized mobility service that attracts migrants without legitimate education and working permits.² If the city could supply a decent public transportation infrastructure, the problem would be solved. Starting from this observation, this article explores an identified discursive interrelation between a pejoratively perceived urban transportation mode and the instrumentalized origin of their drivers, while going beyond rather superficial and often heavily populist rhetoric in local newspapers.

The paper draws on extensive fieldwork mostly conducted in the two southern Russian cities Volgograd and Rostov on Don between 2015 and 2018.³ The study relies on a broad range of more than 40 qualitative interviews, detailed newspaper analysis as well as ethnographic sources derived from go-along interviews in the buses, participant observations and extensive research diaries. While the main focus of the research project was an in-depth analysis of diverse *marshrutka* enterprise structures and respective transportation policies applied in the last two decades on different administrative and operational levels, the great significance of labor migrants in the sector both as a self-describing ascription strategy and as a pejoratively instrumentalized external attribution became obvious during the fieldwork and give reason to this separate article.

Labor migrants literally keep contemporary Russian cities moving, as the urban transportation networks would collapse without their daily services despite widespread derogatory remarks in public newspapers. In private *marshrutka* enterprises, migrant workers fill in the gap that former drivers left behind due to a significant and ongoing decline in the sector’s working

1 S. Prudnikov, “Na marshrutke bez Aziza. Ostanetsia li Peterburg bez inostrannykh voditelei?” *Argumenty i fakty*, July 5, 2017, № 27, accessed December 14, 2017, http://www.spb.aif.ru/society/na_marshrutke_bez_aziza_ostanetsya_li_peterburg_bez_inostrannykh_voditeley.

2 A. Tzipko, “Migrantov zovut na ekzamen!” *Aktual’nye kommentarii*, January 26, 2012, http://actualcomment.ru/migrantov_zovut_na_ekzamen.html (accessed May 23, 2018).

3 T. Weicker, “Russian Cities in Motion. The Marshrutka as a Multifaceted Issue of Post-Soviet Urban Life” (Dissertation), TU Berlin, 2019.

conditions and income perspectives, directly caused by the formalization policy of the government during the last two decades.

Therefore, by turning attention toward the everyday societal negotiation on currently supplied commercial *marshrutka* services, as well as toward the long-term established labor migration living worlds, it quickly becomes evident that although both phenomena are negotiated rather distinctively, they provide a number of remarkable similarities in the argumentation lines of public discourse as well as an empirical point of contact in the subordinated discussion about *marshrutka* modes served by migrant carriers and drivers. This means that both representative actor groups, e.g. everyday semi-formal urban minibuses and transportation workers with migration backgrounds, are increasingly tackled and criticized by a public majority discourse as well as by concrete policies. Moreover, both phenomena are key to preserving everyday societal life. On the one hand, they are the backbone of a slowly transitioning economy sector relying on extremely exploitative working conditions. On the other hand, they are the only reliable engine of everyday urban mobility, which takes urban life and mobile circulation for granted. However, despite their system-immanent function, they remain highly marginalized and are the recipients of critique from a wider public discourse shaped by the Russian majority as well as from official administrations and political programs on different levels.

Therefore, the *marshrutka* living world empirically links two pejorative images: the 'informal minibuses' and the 'non-regulated labor migration flow'. The article aims to criticize this very common interlink of informal transportation with informal labor migrants' conditions and gives more fundamental insights about the development of *marshrutka* enterprises during the last two decades. In this regard, I argue that the actively reproduced pejorative images are directly related to the consequences of a failed reform policy led by local transportation departments. I will show how the *marshrutka* market reforms and subsequent changes in the enterprise framework destroyed the social bonds of the drivers and alienated the transportation workers from each other. Conclusively, the loss of social capital among the drivers led to a significant restructuring of money flows, which benefits the operators and transportation politicians alike at the cost of the driver's livelihood. This may help to explain the decline in service quality in the past years as well as the disappearance of Russian drivers from the labor sector and their replacement with labor migrants.

From a theoretical perspective, the article contributes to the further entanglement of mobility and migration studies, opening up questions of social inequality through the linkages of fluid (in this case) migrant identity patterns

and urban mobility infrastructures. Thinking about patterns of mobility and migration together is promising, as both phenomena are semantically linked through processuality and movement. Moreover, there is a constantly growing body of literature in both academic fields, which increasingly refer to each other and search mutually for a fruitful application of their respective fields of interest.⁴ Nevertheless, many scholars subordinate either migration movements under the lens of a ‘mobilities’ perspective⁵ on society or describe, in turn, notions of mobility as one secondary signifier of migration patterns.⁶ The *marshrutka* assemblage⁷ as a place of encounter and a political issue of concern is a promising starting point to theorize further on the complexity of transportation-related informality and labor as well as on the interrelation of migrant living worlds and urban rhythmicity.

I begin this article by briefly describing the labor migrant environment as well as the basic organization structure of commercial minibus services in contemporary Russian cities. Recognizing the discursive interrelation of migrants and *marshrutka* mobility, I theorize in the second and third sections on the empirically observed categories of mobile migrants and migrant mobility as highly consequential concepts of daily operation. The article concludes with a short discussion of the empirical insights and their theoretical implications.

2 Translocal Patterns of Migration in Fluid Settings of Mobility

According to the Federal Migration Service of the Russian Federation, 8,842,239 people from the cis states resided in Russian territory in October 2016.⁸ Although a large majority moved to Russia to find work in order to send remittances home, only a fraction receives official work and residence permits.⁹ For

4 A. Blunt, “Cultural geographies of migration: mobility, transnationality and diaspora,” *Progress in Human Geography* 31, no. 5 (2007): 684–694.

5 J. Urry, *Sociology Beyond Societies: Mobilities for the Twenty-First Century* (Routledge, 2012).

6 T. Faist, “The mobility turn: a new paradigm for the social sciences?” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 36, no. 11 (2013).

7 B. Anderson and C. McFarlane, “Assemblage and geography,” in *Area*, 43, no. 2 (2011): 124–127.

8 mvd Rossii (Ministry of Internal Affairs), “Otdel’nye pokazateli migratsionnoy situatsii v Rossiyskoy Federatsii za yanvar’ – iyun’ 2019 goda s raspredeleniem po stranam i regionam,” (2018), <https://мвд.рф/Deljatelnost/statistics/migracionnaya/item/17595161> (accessed August 18, 2019).

9 J. Florinskaya and N. Mkrтчyan, “Migratsiia v Rossii v 2016 godu,” *Elektornyy resurs* №19 (37) (2016), 40.

instance, only 1.5 million citizens from the cis states residing in Russia had a work permit in 2014.¹⁰ The official policy of the federal government concerning this issue remains ambivalent and volatile. For instance, current legal texts on labor migration, which were originally issued in 2002 under the title ‘On the legal status of Foreign Citizens’, have since gone through 82 partially extensive amendments.¹¹ The many revisions stand metaphorically for the self-created dilemma of the Russian policy makers, which has already remained unsolved for many years: On the one hand, the government and local governors recognize the high demand for relatively cheap labor in certain sectors of the economy and therefore support status quo practices that force labor migrants to accept uncertain residential conditions. On the other hand, several politicians simultaneously argue in favor of the introduction of strict quotas “that do not meet labour demand [but serve as] a populist response to xenophobia, creating the perception that the government is clamping down on immigration.”¹² That ambivalence is also observable following the last major reform of the federal migration policy in 2015, when the inadequate and insufficient migration census was abolished and replaced by a patent system that promised a better distribution of labor migration in the country.¹³ In reality, the major reforms have been sabotaged by an ever-increasing bureaucracy that prevents many people from initiating permanent working permits.¹⁴ This has led to a situation in which those affected live and work in a sphere of grey transition without social welfare and lack official legal status. Therefore, most non-registered labor migrants continue to work in specific semi-public economic sectors, the most common being “construction, primarily in house and road building, followed by small-scale wholesale trade and public transportation.”¹⁵

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- 10 I. Semenenko, “Ethnicities, Nationalism and the Politics of Identity: Shaping the Nation in Russia,” *Europe-Asia Studies*, 67, no. 2 (2015): 313.
- 11 V. S. Malakhov and M. E. Simon, “Labour Migration Policy in Russia: Considerations on Governmentality,” *International Migration*, 56, no. 3 (2018): 63.
- 12 C. Schenk, “Controlling Immigration Manually: Lessons from Moscow (Russia),” *Europe-Asia Studies*, 65, no. 7 (2013): 1445.
- 13 C. Schenk, “Anti-migrant, but not nationalist: Pursuit of legitimation through immigration discourse and policy,” in P. Kolsto and H. Blakkisrud (eds.), *Russia Before and After Crimea: Nationalism and Identity*, 2010–17 (Edenborough University Press 2018), 243–244.
- 14 V. S. Malakhov and M. E. Simon, “Labour Migration Policy in Russia: Considerations on Governmentality,” *International Migration*, 56, no. 3 (2018): 65.
- 15 V. S. Malakhov, “Russia as a New Immigration Country: Policy Response and Public Debate,” *Europe-Asia Studies*, 66, no. 7 (2014): 1064.

In contrast to widespread anti-immigrant rhetoric among local officials and opinion leaders,¹⁶ a closer consideration of migration living worlds reveals a more complex picture of motion and belonging in transnational and translocal contexts. Obviously, the attribution of ‘cis migrant’ tells us little about the everyday experiences of individuals. People arriving from countries such as Uzbekistan, Armenia, Ukraine, Tajikistan or Georgia in order to find work in the Russian transport sector are confronted with different challenges and bureaucratic obstacles, depending on their respective destination city or district. Life biographies, defiance and integration potential also depend heavily on ascribed ethnicity, access to personal and relative networks, working environments and many more determinants.

However, one main commonality among cis migrants is their common Soviet heritage. Even though some citizens of the cis countries are officially registered as foreigners, many have temporary work permits or might be missing some registration documents, many of them have been living and working in today’s Russia rather than their newly established home states for most of their lives. The categorial subordination of labor migrants with different status according to their residence permit is exposed here as a widely artificial ascription system with little meaning. In this sense, Cordula Gdaniec depicts the metropolises in Russia as examples of post-colonial or “post-imperial cities.”¹⁷ She reflects on an encounter with labor migrants during one of her fieldwork trips to a main marketplace in Moscow concerning the attitude toward Central Asians:

I noticed a feeling of normality rather than marginality, reminiscent of the Soviet situation when people from Central Asia were, just like Russians, Soviet citizens [...] Since the break-up of the USSR, citizens of the other republics become de facto foreigners in Russia, even if they feel completely at home there, and are framed as migrants, thus becoming marginal not only discursively.¹⁸

However, as Jeff Sahadeo has argued, the Soviet ideology of a ‘friendship of the peoples’ functioned only as a superficial frame, covering underlying practices of marginalization and ethnic violence and conducted under the rule of the

16 B. Dave, “Becoming ‘Legal’ through ‘Illegal’ Procedures: The Precarious Status of Migrant Workers in Russia,” *Russian Analytical Digest*, 159, no. 159 (2014): 2.

17 C. Gdaniec, *Cultural Diversity in Russian Cities: The Urban Landscape in the Post-Soviet Era* (Berghahn Books, 2010), 10.

18 *Ibid.*, 11.

superior Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. It is all the more interesting to note that the collective identification pattern of a *Homo sovieticus* continues to be widely reproduced by various affected individuals in spite of very different understandings of belonging.¹⁹ Many of my interview respondents identified themselves as people of non-Russian origin and referred repeatedly to a common past that has eased living and working conditions in the Russian Federation. Samat, a sixty-seven-year-old *marshrutka* driver in Moscow, worked for many years in the commercial transportation sector of the city. He explained his relation to his country of residence by referring to his own Soviet biography:

I have basically two professions: I am actually a railway worker! I worked 39 years in the railway sector. But as it happens in life! We are people of Soviet manufacture, we lived together in the Soviet Union.²⁰

Especially experienced drivers combine their personal Soviet identity with better working conditions during that time, stating:

To tell the truth, previously the profession as a driver was highly reputed [...]. For instance, the income was exclusive and drivers enjoyed certain privileges, orderly working hours for example and paid recreational leave. [...] However, today it is not prestigious anymore to work as a *marshrutka* driver. You can hardly make a living from it. This profession doesn't have any future.²¹

Samat's life work building a railway system for a formerly united country and Igor's experience of decay underline the multidimensional nature of origin and affiliation. Their stories exemplify the multi-layered intricacy of origin and mobility patterns, representing an ambivalent status quo in contemporary Russian society, where on the one hand narratives of multiculturalism are forced to ensure reciprocal recognition in everyday urban life, while on the other hand historically grown racial prejudices are applied as a public demarcation and discrimination strategy as well as a more or less successful populist instrument in political discourses. Indeed, Samat's work experience is far from

19 J. Sahadeo, "Druzhiba narodov or second-class citizenship? Soviet Asian migrants in a post-colonial world," *Central Asian Survey*, 26, no. 4 (2007): 559–79.

20 Samat, 67 years old, marshrutka driver, interview by Tonio Weicker, May 24, 2016, Moscow.

21 Igor, 63 years old, marshrutka driver (non-Russian origin), interview by Tonio Weicker, October 15, 2017, Rostov on Don.

romantic. He describes his everyday work schedule for a large-scale commercial company in Moscow:

Well, at four o'clock you get up, at five o'clock you should already be at the depot to get the car, to go through different check-ups. And at 05:30–6:00 o'clock, you should already be at the final stop. Well, depending on your schedule. [...] you end at 12 am. [...] You sleep three hours and go back to work. And we worked five [days in a row]. Sometimes it happened that you had to work on the sixth day, when they did not have enough people, they asked for volunteers. In these weeks, I had only one day off. It was real slave labor (Samat, 67 years, *marshrutka* driver 5/24/2016).

In this sense, mobility and migration patterns appear more complex than descriptively expectable because they are conglomerated in frictional biographies, multiple layers of urban life, collective identity constructions as well as in everyday performed practices and institutions.

3 Central Asian Minibus Drivers as crucial actors in the urban transportation of Russian Cities

Like Samat or Igor, tens of thousands of people with supposedly non-Russian origins work momentarily in the commercial public transportation sector in several Russian cities. The *marshrutka*, operated as a private minibus transportation service, is an especially widespread phenomenon in nearly all of the successor states of the Soviet Union. In most post-Soviet cities, *marshrutkas* provide the largest supply of public transportation, often offering the only reliable transportation option for citizens due to a chronic undersupply of state- led public tramways, trolleys, or large buses.²² Although *marshrutkas* already existed on the fringes of the Soviet Union, the more recent and widespread emergence of urban minibus mobility is closely connected to the breakdown of the Soviet Union and the early years of transition.²³

The disastrous financial situation of most local municipalities, which shortly after the fall of the former centralized state bore responsibility for local transportation supplies, led to the continuous breakdown of existing state-owned vehicle parks and therefore to an ongoing decrease of public transportation

22 W. Sgibnev and A. Vozyanov, "Assemblages of mobility: the marshrutkas of Central Asia," *Central Asian Survey* 35, vol. 2 (2016): 277.

23 Anna Sanina, "The marshrutka as a socio-cultural phenomenon of a Russian megacity," *City, Culture and Society*, 2, no. 4 (2011): 212.

mobility.²⁴ Privately organized and commercialized *marshrutkas* appeared in this situation as a promising gap filler that was non-reliant on rare subsidies from the state.²⁵ That said, an important, albeit widely forgotten, layer of *marshrutka* history is its emergence as a fairly elitist and expensive minibus service for the better off, who could afford to skip long queues for rare and overcrowded municipal buses or trams.²⁶ In this sense, *marshrutka* mobility was highly regarded in the early nineties – far from their present assessment.

However, since the establishment of *marshrutka* mobility in Russian cities as a mass phenomenon and as a middle- or even long-term transportation solution, there has been constant public opposition to minibus transportation solutions due to their perceived low quality and facilitation of criminal business structures.²⁷⁻²⁸ And indeed, there have been several cases in the private transportation sector of Russian cities, especially in the late nineties and early years after the Millennium, of proof corruption offences, money-laundering and illegal employment within the *marshrutka* business.²⁹⁻³⁰ In this sense, the development of *marshrutka* mobility in Russian cities can inter alia be interpreted as the juxtaposition of formalization attempts by the local municipalities trying more or less successfully to create *marshrutka* mobility patterns in their cities. For instance, Lyudmila Shaytanova and Andrey Kuznetsov have shown how the local government forced *marshrutka* operators and drivers to officially register by making route licenses obligatory in Volgograd.³¹ This,

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- 24 A. Vorobyev, J. Shulika, and V. Vasileva, “Formal and Informal Institutions for Urban Transport Management,” in M. Blinkin and E. Koncheva (eds.), *Transport Systems of Russian Cities* (Springer, 2016), 180.
- 25 A. Kuznetsov and L. Shaitanova, “Marshrutkas: Spinoffs of Post-Soviet Urban Mobilities” (2014): 3.
- 26 A. Sanina, “The marshrutka as a socio-cultural phenomenon of a Russian megacity,” *City, Culture and Society*, 2, no. 4 (2011): 211–18.
- 27 V. Koltashov, “Marshrutki, territorii bez zakona,” *Echo of Moscow*, <http://echo.msk.ru/blog/koltashov/1559826-echo/> (accessed December 18, 2015).
- 28 V. Volgin, “Marshrutchnyi korol,” *Shuberskoe. Voronezh*, July 24, 2016, <http://shuberka.ru/home/oblastnye/1347-marshrutochnyj-korol> (accessed November 28, 2017).
- 29 A. Zolotuchina, “Chlenam Cheliabinskoi opg, razvernulshei ‘marshrutnye voine,’ vynes- li prigovor,” *ura.ru*, December 20, 2016, <https://ura.news/news/1052271685> (accessed November 23, 2017).
- 30 S. Zacharkin, “Marshrutnye voyny: Strakh i nenavist’ v passazhirskih perevozkakh Novosibirsk,” *sib.fm*, May 5, 2016, <https://sib.fm/articles/2016/05/05/marshrutnye-voyny> (accessed November 23, 2017).
- 31 L. Shaytanova and A. Kuznetsov, “Sotsial’naia istoriia marshrutnykh taksi g. Volgograda: Preemstvennost’ slov i razryvy praktik,” *Vestnik Volgogradskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta. Seriya 9: Issledovaniia molodykh uchenykh*, no. 12 (2014).

however, negatively affected the working conditions of thus far widespread independent transportation workers.

By trying to “regain at least part of their ability to finance bus capital and operations, and to restore at least part of their operating capacity,”³² the consolidation of the *marshrutka* market subsequently led to the deterioration of the drivers’ conditions. Although the daily risk of their work remained, drivers lost their entrepreneurial ability to act because of the establishment of a subcontracting franchise model in officially registered private transportation enterprises. Consequently, the profession’s attractiveness started to fade away and transportation conditions for passengers worsened. Yurii Belousov, the chairman of the Association for Passenger Automobility Transportation in Volgograd, summarizes:

When *marshrutka* mobility emerged, drivers were able to generate a respectable income. Back then, many wanted to work in this area, so there was a certain selection at stake. Today, this situation has radically changed. There is a wide lack of staff, so [operators] take almost every-one. It is of course difficult to combat rule violation, but it is still possible. Therefore, we have to act as a united front: the consumer, the carrier control agencies, the administration and so on. It is important to raise the prestige of the profession. After all, this is a dangerous but socially important and very responsible work.³³

This caused enterprises to increasingly employ labor migrants in many places, a practice that especially grew after the transformation of private transportation enterprises due to regulation changes and the transformation of local markets. Olga Parschina comments on the aftermath of *marshrutka* reforms in Krasnoyarsk as follows:

In the transportation sector of Krasnoyarsk, the private companies try to minimize the expenditure and maximize the gains, which follows a downgrade in quality. This applies in particular to commercial transportation companies. They use inappropriate, obsolete vehicle fleets and

32 B. Finn, “Market role and regulation of extensive urban minibus services as large bus service capacity is restored – Case studies from Ghana, Georgia and Kazakhstan,” *Research in Transportation Economics*, 22, no. 1 (2008): 119.

33 J. N. Belousov, “Rabochaya gruppa ischet problemy tam, gde ikh net,” *V1.ru*, January 22, 2014, <http://v1.ru/text/gorod/748887.html> (accessed February 26, 2018).

hire unqualified cheap labor forces mostly from Central Asia, which partially cannot communicate with the passengers.³⁴

At this point, it is important to note that the share of labor migrants differs widely from city to city and seems to generally correlate with the average degree of income in a city. In this sense, relatively rich cities like Saint Petersburg demonstrate a much higher supply of labor migrants working in the public transportation sector than cities like Volgograd, for instance, which has a significantly lower income level.³⁵ There are other factors, such as geographical determinants or the varying number of operators in a city,³⁶ that condition different degrees of competition in the transportation sector from city to city and therefore affect the local employment rate of labor migrants. Moreover, the general supply of traffic participants (including private car mobility or the existence of a metro system) influences the market position of *marshrutka* providers and working conditions of the drivers.

Conclusively, it should be noted that the ongoing attempts of local authorities to domesticate publicly criticized *marshrutka* practices in their cities have in most cases not led to a more positive image of *marshrutka* mobility. On the contrary, more and more municipalities are trying to reduce or fully shut down *marshrutka* transportation offers. Some showcase projects – for example, those of Kazan³⁷ or Moscow³⁸ – have already abolished *marshrutka* operators from the public transportation supply. Other attempts have been less successful due

34 O. I. Parschina, “Issledovanie problem gorodskogo obshhestvennogo passazhirskogo transporta” (udk 656, Sibirskii Federal’nyi Universitet, Krasnoyarsk, 2012).

35 A. Gavriolova, “Defitsit voditelei v Peterburge: russkie ne khotiat, migrantov ne khotim,” *Moi Raion*, December 27, 2012, <http://mr7.ru/articles/64291/> (accessed December 13, 2017).

36 As a rule of thumb, big transportation enterprises tend to offer lower terms of employment and independencies, while smaller operators often consist of personal network relations, which opens up a certain negotiation scope. Furthermore, small operators rely on drivers who bring their own vehicles and dispose therefore of more resources, while bigger operators often enter into leasing contracts with vehicle owners, which further strains the driver’s income charges.

37 N. Ischmuratov, “Aidar Abdulchakov o transportnykh problemakh i sposobakh ikh resheniia v Kazani,” *newsnn.ru*, November 16, 2016, <https://newsnn.ru/interview/16-11-2016/ay-dar-abdulhakov-o-transportnyh-problemah-i-sposobah-ih-resheniya-v-kazani> (accessed May 25, 2018).

38 I. Degot’kova, “Moskva bez marshrutok: bezobrazie ili zabota o passazhirakh,” *Novye izvestiia*, September 21, 2016, <http://www.newizv.ru/society/2016-09-21/247106-moskva-bez-marshrutok-bezobrazie-ili-zabota-o-passazhirah.html> (accessed December 8, 2016).

to the inability to provide alternative public transportation offers, which provoked the rise of illegal or grey modes of minibus providers in order to satisfy urban transportation needs. In this period of uncertainty, *marshrutka* drivers additionally face very exploitative everyday working conditions and further job insecurity, while others have already been pushed into semi-legal spheres in order to sustain their monthly income.

3.1 *Mobile Migrants – Mobility constrains based on origin and citizenship*

A closer look at the life conditions of *marshrutka* drivers and the structure of their mobility demands is equally complex. Some of the migrant *marshrutka* drivers do not get a valid working permit in Russia, which means that they risk receiving fines. Other drivers are forced to regularly commute between their working destination and country of origin. Back in their home countries, migrants have to apply for a new residential or work permit. That also comes with high expenses and a loss of mobility capital. In this sense, the administrative structure of Russian migration policy creates by itself a permanent circulation flow of labor migrants.

Despite that, the attribution of ethnicity and citizenship also plays a role in the everyday mobility networks of the drivers. In Saint Petersburg, for example, many *marshrutka* lines are either served by teams consisting of solely Russian drivers or of labor-migrants of different origins. Mirobid, a fifty-five-year-old *marshrutka* driver, explains:

We have fourteen drivers in our brigade. They come from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan or Kyrgyzstan. Previously, we also had two Russians, but they disappeared: one was always drunken and the other one had health problems. However, with the arrivals of migrants it's easier: they take the work seriously because they do not have any alternatives.³⁹

Babur, born in 1959 in Dushanbe, has been driving *marshrutkas* in Saint Petersburg for seven years. He claims that there is also a hierarchy of lines that reflect the origin of the drivers. According to him, “Russian drivers work on the better lines with more passengers,”⁴⁰ which also means a higher income for the drivers.

39 Mirobid Oblokulov, 55 years old, *marshrutka* driver, interview by Anastasija Gavriellova, December 27, 2012.

40 Gavriellova, “Defitsit voditelei v Peterburge: russkie ne khotiat, migrantov ne khotim”, 2.

A further mobility constraint for the majority of the migrant drivers was created by the revision of the federal law ‘about traffic safety’ in May 2013. Implemented only in June 2017, the revisions state in Article 1, paragraph thirteen that:

It is forbidden to drive vehicles on the basis of foreign national or international driving permits when carrying out entrepreneurial or labor activities directly related to the transport sector.⁴¹

This has huge consequences for private transportation in Russian cities. In Saint Petersburg, for instance, only 8 percent of the approximately 3,600 migrant *marshrutka* drivers actually possess a Russian driver’s license. The Russian newspaper *Argumenty i fakty* suggested that, if the new regulation is put into practice, 100,000 drivers should expect to lose the right to proceed with their everyday work.⁴² Due to the high costs and long waiting lists to register for a Russian driver’s license exam in category D, operators expected a significant shortage of already rare drivers, especially in the big cities. And indeed, when the law was finally implemented in Rostov on Don in June 2017, the number of vehicles decreased significantly overnight, which immediately elicited strong complaints from passengers and operators alike.⁴³ The public discussion before and after the implementation of the revised law on traffic safety reinforces the synchronized perception of insufficient mobility performances and the origin of drivers. A transportation provider in Saint Petersburg argued accordingly against the ‘societal myth’ that migrant drivers are badly educated and have rude driving manners:

There is a misconception in society that all migrants are uneducated. But in Uzbekistan and in Tajikistan, the rules for driver licenses are as strict as in Russia, and the drivers themselves are not inferior, as far as their skills are concerned, in comparison to their local colleagues. Another misconception is connected to the fact that migrants often are involved

41 O vnesenii izmenenii v Federal’nyi zakon: “O bezopasnosti dorozhnogo dvizheniia” i kodeks Rossiiskoj Federatsii ob administrativnykh pravonarusheniakh, Federal Law of the Russian Federation, N 92-Φ3 (07.05.2013).

42 V. Grebenkova, “Voditeli-migranti, na eksamen! Pochemu v Rostove stali rezhe khodit’ marshrutki,” *Argumenty i fakty*, June 21, 2017.

43 N. Kitov, “V Rostove propali marsrutki: Sygralo rol priniatnie novykh zakonov, zatrudnivchikh trud migrantov,” *Panorama*, June 15, 2017, <http://panram.ru/news/transport/v-rostove-propali-marshrutki/> (accessed July 20, 2018).

in accidents. In the last seventeen years in Russia, 500,000 people were killed by road accidents. Of these, only 5,000 were caused by migrants.⁴⁴

Indeed, the law tells us much about predominant stereotypes in large parts of society. A superficial analysis of the circumstances of the private transportation sector in Russia makes it obvious that harsh labor conditions, such as the long unofficial working hours of drivers (required if they hope to earn enough to survive), the low quality of parking lots and the congestion of existing urban road infrastructure are largely responsible for the insufficiency of the mobility mode. The purpose of this law, besides populist activism, remains questionable.

However, the remarks prove that attributions of origin and citizenship significantly determine the shape of mobility capital of migrant drivers. Migrant transportation workers have to react simultaneously to very different structural restrictions like laws, operational guidelines and discursive attribution. In turn, local *marshrutka* mobility networks are determined by restrictions of the federal migration policy. As a matter of fact, local drivers are also discursively confronted with the insufficiency of their mobility operations. In this merger, migrant drivers also have to react to internal and external hierarchies and preconceptions of their origins, which all include mobility expectations.

Therefore, they often have to utilize equally fluid practices as applied in the operational mode of *marshrutka* mobility in order to continue to exist. This once again demonstrates the mutual coexistence of the mobility mode and marginalized position of migrants in urban spaces. The publicly applied argumentation structure is surprisingly similar, with both labor migrants and *marshrutka* mobility considered relevant because of a current lack of proper alternatives.⁴⁵ At the same time, they remain limited as a temporary, transitional phenomenon that will somehow disappear in the future. Furthermore, there is a common reference in the policies toward urban mobility and migration to limited temporality, used as an argument for inactivity in this sphere.

Consequently, the common pejorative description of *marshrutka* modes and their migrant drivers leads to a reinforcing process of discursive marginalization. In response, migrant drivers have to be flexible in order to incorporate

44 Prudnikov, “Na marshrutke bez Aziza. Ostanetsia li Peterburg bez inostrannykh voditelei?”

45 The cynical argument concerning labor migration goes that proper labor is too expensive for a still-developing economy and will slow down the structural development of the state. Equally, local municipalities do not see alternatives to the current public transport supply because of missing financial capital.

themselves in often contradictory, pre-conditioned situational contexts and to respond to very different structural determinants, expectations and rules in a systemically precarious environment.

3.2 *Migrant Mobility – Everyday intangibility as a constant representation of migration and mobility fluidity*

In the microcosm of *marshrutka* performances in a random Russian city, it becomes quickly evident that *marshrutkas* are simultaneously omnipresent in the urban space and at the same time non-locatable. This is because many commercial transportation providers do not actually have their own garages or depots, although cities have huge supplies of minibus vehicles to respond to everyday mobility demands. In general, the structure of private urban transportation companies is rather fluidly embedded in urban infrastructure.⁴⁶ Therefore, the official offices of operators are often separated from employee gathering points. Although drivers and cars have to go through certain health and technical control checks every morning, the garages where those inspections take place are often not related to the line or vehicle owners.

The main meeting points of *marshrutka* drivers are the last stops of the lines, mostly vacant ‘non-places’⁴⁷ in the peripheries of a city that are spontaneously and temporarily used as parking lots for resting *marshrutka* drivers. Here, the drivers spend their breaks under the direction of so-called dispatchers, who control the sequence and order of specific lines. This remarkably contrasts the large and representative municipal transportation depots in the setting of post-Soviet cities.⁴⁸⁻⁴⁹⁻⁵⁰ Although *marshrutkas* have been the superior transportation device in the Russian Federation for more than two decades now, no *marshrutka* operator known to me resides in a representative headquarter – instead, they hide their residency in remote neighborhoods.⁵¹ There is usually

46 Sgibnev and Vozyanov, “Assemblages of mobility: the marshrutkas of Central Asia.”

47 M. Augé, “Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity,” trans. J. Howe, *London and New York: Verso*, 2008.

48 N. V. Pruglo, *Narodnyy transport Tsaritsyna – Stalingrada – Volgograda: is proshlogo v budushee: K 100-letiyu trolleybusa*, (Volgograd: Panorama, 2013).

49 met Volgograd, “Muzey,” news release, <http://www.gortransvolga.ru/about/museum/> (accessed July 24, 2017).

50 State-led public transport infrastructure remains a *lieu de memoire* in Russian society and reflects the quick urban modernisation and industrial development of the Soviet Union. In this sense, many contemporary Russian cities host museums of public transportation development in representative depots of former Soviet transportation providers.

51 One must add that the degree of operator formalization varies from city to city. Some cities allow hundreds of very small operators to provide their services, while other

no contact point or official address to engage with minibus providers and companies. The omnipresent *marshrutka* phenomenon remains invisible – as do its underlying structures, interdependencies, employment forms, and individual interventions – in order to maintain the urban mobility mode.

Just as the *marshrutka* enterprises literally hide from the public sphere, so do the transportation workers in urban spaces.⁵² Indeed, this is a common phenomenon for migrant workers confronted with racial discrimination and xenophobic attacks: they use fluid and contemporary appearances in the urban space as a conflict-avoidance strategy.⁵³ In Russian cities, this is particularly observable in the construction sector, where entire brigades live in their respective construction sites, fully isolated from the remaining urban sphere.⁵⁴ Similar practices are observed in the Russian trade sector, where the marketplace serves as a place of accommodation for marginalized groups, which, for different discriminatory reasons, are not able to access proper housing.⁵⁵ However, it is interesting to note that the *marshrutka* market's hidden enterprise structures and remote resting areas were established long before labor migrants entered into the business. Nevertheless, it was obviously advantageous for semi-formal enterprise structures to deal with unsolved questions of residence and work permits away from an attentive public.

Due to the fluid appearance of both mobility institutions and employed transportation workers, it may seem confusing that *marshrutka* practices appear to have a low degree of institutionalization, as passengers are unlikely to get in touch with underlying practices and structures. However, a deeper consideration of the issue unveils well-established institutions and hierarchies

municipalities limit operators. In a few cities – for example, in Saint Petersburg – there are only two or three operators with huge numbers of lines and vehicle parks. Those companies, of course, also provide headquarters and public relations services.

- 52 The most obvious example of this is informal dispatchers, who conduct the minibus flow in dense areas. Although they are a common sight in many cities, they never appear officially and literally hide as waiting passengers. See O. Gopalo, “V Rostove ‘svistki’ oblozhili dan’yu voditeley obschestvennogo transporta,” *Komsomolskaia pravda*, January 30, 2015, <https://www.rostov.kp.ru/daily/26335/3218726/> (accessed May 28, 2018).
- 53 B. E. Winer and A. V. Tavrovskii, “Migranty na rynkakh truda v Sankt-Peterburge,” *Zhurnal sotsiologii i sotsial’noi antropologii*, 12, no. 4 (2009): 97–121.
- 54 J. Round and I. Kuznetsova, “Necropolitics and the migrant as a political subject of disgust: The precarious everyday of Russia’s labour migrants,” *Critical Sociology*, 42, no. 7–8 (2016): 1017–34.
- 55 S. V. Riazantzev, “Etnicheskoe predprimatel’stvo kak forma adaptatsii migrantov,” *Obshchestvennye nauki i sovremennost’*, no. 5 (2000): 73–86.

in the enterprises and among workers that significantly shape and organize the working day of *marshrutka* drivers.⁵⁶

In this sense, not only do the conditions and institutions behind *marshrutka* mobility provision remain unnoticed, but the wide variety of employment status, payment flows and power struggles also determines the everyday appearance of the mobility mode and its drivers. Few have considered, for instance, the financial pressure especially facing sub-renting drivers.⁵⁷ Narek, a fifty-years-old *marshrutka* driver in Rostov on Don, complains:

The system of public transportation supply in Rostov on Don is really stupid. If you want to work, you first have to pay money [...] I have to pay like 20,000 – 25,000 rubles⁵⁸ per month to the garage only for the fact that I may work on this car.⁵⁹

Despite that, *marshrutka* practices also include hidden representations of collectivism as a strategy of demarcation as well as affiliation. For instance, although solidarity among drivers is decreasing,⁶⁰ the last stops of lines are important places of gathering and community for migrant drivers. Occasionally, one can observe how smaller operators fondly provide furnished little sheds where the local dispatcher switches into the hybrid role of a caring patron, serving tea and cake to the drivers while chatting in the mother tongue about daily incidents on the road. One young Armenian driver, who just arrived in Rostov on Don a couple of weeks ago, told me in an interview:

56 N. V. Sorokina, “‘Desyat’ Minut Strakha i Vy Doma!’: Povsednevnost’ Voditeley Gorodskikh Marshrutok,” *Etnograficheskoe obozrenie* no. 5 (2008): 61–74.

57 The hierarchies, status and income level of drivers are highly diverse. They depend not only on financial resources but also on personal networks and work experience. For instance, a car-owning *marshrutka* driver is more independent in negotiations with the carrier than a car-renting driver who depends on the conditions of the transport enterprise.

58 The value of the Russian currency has been subject to wide fluctuations since the inflation crisis in 2014. The current exchange rate is relatively stable – about 75 rub/1 eur. However, the statistical value of a currency says little about value concepts within a country, working segment or social class (C. Deutschmann, “Geld als soziales Konstrukt. Zur Aktualität von Marx und Simmel,” *Leviathan*, 23, no. 3 (1995): 377). That is why I do not convert certain price information in this text into international comparison currencies, unless my informants switch by themselves between certain currencies.

59 Narek, 50 years, driver, interview by Tonio Weicker, October 22, 2017, Rostov on Don.

60 Shaitanova and Kuznetsov, “Sotsial’naia istoriia marshrutnykh taksi g. Volgograda: Preemstvennost’ slov i razryvy praktik.”

Of course, we have to work many hours in order to save some money. But I am new here in town. I don't know anyone in the city. That's why I appreciate spending time with my fellows in my workplace.⁶¹

However, this interlocutor works for a very small transportation enterprise in Rostov on Don, which serves only three peripheral routes on the outskirts of the city and almost exclusively hires Armenian workers to drive their buses. Their case proves that solidarity among drivers may occur as a significant resource. Solidarity is no longer based on common interests as an employment group, e.g. as disadvantaged and highly exploited *marshrutka* drivers, but may survive in trust networks based on origin.

Furthermore, enterprise size plays a major role in enforcing or contradicting solidarity among drivers. In this sense, transportation workers are less determined by origin or migrant living worlds and more by the profound structure of the transportation enterprise for which they work. Especially in the big private transportation enterprises, most drivers state that they actually have no personal relation to their colleagues. Although they cooperate during work, most of the drivers do not express any loyalty to the company or solidarity with their fellow drivers. This is a relatively new development, as Kuznetsov and Shaytanova show in one of their articles. One of their interview respondents explains:

Previously, when we started *marshrutka*-driving, in the first two or three years, we supported each other any time also outside of the working hours. If a minibus was broken, we phoned each other: 'My minibus is broken. I need to be towed to the garage!' We dropped everything and went to help. We repaired the vehicle and got back to work (58-year-old self-dependent *marshrutka* driver in Volgograd in the 90s).⁶²

4 Discussion

At first sight, it appears counterintuitive that bigger private transportation enterprises, which provide a greater dependence on reliable workflows that

61 Unknown, young Armenian *marshrutka* driver, interview by Tonio Weicker, October 13, 2017, Rostov on Don.

62 Shaitanova and Kuznetsov, "Sotsial'naia istoriia marshrutnykh taksi g. Volgograda: Preemstvennost' slov i razryvy praktik." 57.

could potentially be used by drivers as labor dispute capital moreover, may be characterized as less solidly united and more competitive on the workers' level. In this sense, one could argue that trade unions are more likely to be successfully implemented in bigger transportation enterprises than in kinship-based smaller operator structures, which rely on mutual negotiation, personal dependencies and trust networks. However, the empirical evidence indicates that *marshrutka* drivers have demonstrated the ability to organize major strikes and attain public attention in settings where smaller operators dominate the city market,⁶³⁻⁶⁴ while bigger commercial transportation providers successfully prevent major demonstrations for labor rights among their employees.

To explain this superficial paradox, one has to consider the different employee states among drivers in bigger transportation enterprises, which are characterized by complex financial dependency layers of individual workers. Most importantly, the ownership structure of the vehicles varies significantly between smaller and bigger transportation operators, to the detriment of the drivers. As the figure below illustrates, one major change in the enterprise structure after the reforms is that drivers do not possess their own vehicles anymore. Instead, most of the drivers have to rent their vehicles, which is an additional financial burden and, more importantly, a loss in capital to negotiate with the operator. Because many operators no longer support the model of self-owned drivers, transportation workers have also lost the unlikely opportunity to climb up in the imaginative ranking order and to become, for instance, mini-operators who provide a couple of cars and drivers to the daily operation, which ensures maximum self-dependency.⁶⁵

63 S. Viktorov, "Perevozchiki Volgograda prigrozili revolyutsiei," *VI.ru*, September 14, 2016, <http://v1.ru/text/gorod/210972006658048.html?full=3> (accessed February 26, 2018).

64 Regnum, "Zabastovka voditeley marshrutok v stolitse Kirgizii zavershilas'," *Regnum*, April 3, 2018, <https://regnum.ru/news/2399626.html> (accessed May 14, 2018).

65 Nonetheless, the figure also deconstructs the neoliberal myth of drivers as self-dependent micro-entrepreneurs. A deeper consideration of the driver's action scopes shows clearly that most of them do not have any opportunities to manage self-dependent investments but sell their labor force and bear the risk of daily outage costs. The rare group of mini- operators could be called an exception to this; however, they have little in common with ordinary drivers. This is especially true for drivers working in big-size transport enterprises, rather than for self-owning drivers, who at least have the illusion of potential increases in capital and influence over time.

| | Variety of drivers | Description | Payment mode |
|--|----------------------------------|--|---|
| | Sub-subcontractors | Substitute drivers jump in on different buses on a daily basis. | Employed by other car-owning drivers. |
| Dominating ownership structure in big transportation enterprises | Ordinary Drivers | Work for an operator and rent out the vehicle from them. | Monthly fees to the operator for the route license and car rent. |
| | Fictional Self-Dependent Drivers | Drivers are registered as Individual Entrepreneurs but rent a vehicle from a third person. | Monthly fees to the operator & monthly fees to the car owner. |
| Dominating ownership structure in small transportation enterprises | Shareholder Drivers | Drivers who share the credit for a self-owned car. | Monthly fees to the operator & loan instalments. |
| | Self-dependent Drivers | Drivers who own their own car. | Monthly fees to the operator; Savings to invest in a new car & maintenance. |
| | Mini-Operators without licenses | Drivers who own a little vehicle fleet (2–10 vehicles) and hire drivers to work for them. | Monthly fees to the licensed operator. |

However, as *marshrutka* drivers increasingly do not own their cars and do not know their colleagues, they also lose the reason and the ability to achieve solidarity among their working collective. In a broader sense, the increasing formalization and neoliberalization of *marshrutka* services has made those “survival strategies”⁶⁶ superfluous in many cases. Today, one can observe how certain *marshrutka* drivers, operators or line owners do not attempt to build

66 Another consequence of this is that drivers have no incentive to maintain the vehicles anymore. While they still ensure that the vehicles run, many passengers complain about the ongoing decline of *marshrutka* interiors. This is a sharp contrast to former *marshrutka* settings, where most drivers were tempted to carefully decorate their own cars and maintain cleanliness in the cabin.

trust networks or community patterns around the working place. In contrast, many drivers see themselves in direct competition, especially with their closest colleagues, which can even occasionally lead to physical struggles.⁶⁷ It was indeed the process of building enterprise hierarchies and different employment forms with various monetary obligations (followed by a detachment between transportation workers and operators, a division that did not exist in the 90s)⁶⁸ that led to an individualization and an increase of competition among the drivers within one company.⁶⁹ Although the degree of atomization among transportation workers differs from operator to operator, the general trend seems irreversible as remaining small operators struggle with the financial requirements for modern vehicle fleets. Their operations are gradually dying out. One *marshrutka* operator from Volgograd stated:

From formerly 30 buses, there are today only 20 buses left [in my company]. Some of the drivers disappeared. This happens because the competition is very strong. There are so many minibuses on the street and some of the independent drivers just go bankrupt, especially because the requirements are getting higher and higher. Every year you have to prove that your car still complies with the requirements. That means you have to invest continuously. So, some drivers just fade out [...] actually, it is very difficult to maintain the business because no one is willing to drive *marshrutkas* anymore. I mean, who is willing to work for 15,000–16,000 rubles⁷⁰ per month?⁷¹

The changes in transportation enterprises have enabled migrant drivers to enter the business for several reasons. *Marshrutka* operators increasingly draw on cheap labor forces provided by migrant workers because no one else is willing to accept poor conditions and low income. Moreover, migrant *marshrutka* drivers rarely enter the enterprise as self-investing micro-entrepreneurs but

67 During my fieldwork, I was once a witness of a physical fight between drivers who worked on the same route. The conflict was sparked by the driver who was driving behind, who accused the driver in front of him of intentionally driving slowly in order to ‘steal’ passengers.

68 Kuznetsov and Shaitanova, “Marshrutkas: Spinoffs of Post-Soviet Urban Mobilities”.

69 L. Rekhviashvili and W. Sgibnev, “Uber, Marshrutkas and socially (dis-) embedded mobilities,” *The Journal of Transport History*, 2018.

70 15,000 rubles is the average loan of the lowest employment stratum in Russia – for instance, salesmen/women or ticket inspectors receive this type of loan. Workers normally need a second income source to make a living.

71 Timofei, interview by Tonio Weicker, June 16, 2016, Volgograd.

rather as drivers who additionally rent out third-person minibuses. Both developments increase the pressure on drivers to accumulate a certain degree of income, which further alienates them from their colleagues. Concurrently, this changes the structure of local transportation enterprises as small operators slowly fade out and are replaced by bigger carriers, which in turn decreases the resources of solidarity in a continuous downward spiral.

5 Conclusion

Urban studies literature often describes how social inequality and processes of marginalization are mirrored and cemented in urban space, infrastructure and dwelling.^{72,73} However, the *marshrutka* example shows that marginalization and discrimination in a majority society can similarly be examined through mobility performances in urban space. One described conflict-coping strategy of the persons affected by that marginalization and discrimination is to become ‘invisible’ in urban space. Those people are pushed to peripheral parts of the urban agglomeration or even quartered in contemporary accommodations near their working place. It is therefore interesting that the aloofness and intangibility of *marshrutka* mobility appear as metaphorically reflected in the perception of migrant workers in the urban sphere. The everyday encounter, in this sense, stabilizes the intangibility of the ‘*marshrutka*-mobility’ black box seen from passengers’ point of view, which makes space for populist marginalization and discrimination discourses. Indeed, it seems to be this very fluid interplay of appearance and vanishing that strengthens the continuously and publicly reproduced pejorative picture of both the insufficient mobility mode and the migrant worker as a transient phenomenon.

From a theoretical perspective, the article shows how a ‘mobilities’ perspective is applicable to the analysis of everyday migration living worlds. Translocal understandings of urban mobility assemblages may contribute to a better description of current social struggles in the organization of urban mobility services.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, “any analysis of spatial and social mobilities needs to go beyond descriptions and start accounting for the mechanisms underlying the

72 D. S. Massey, “American apartheid: Segregation and the making of the underclass,” *American Journal of Sociology*, 96, no. 2 (1990): 329–57.

73 R. D. Peterson and L. J. Krivo, *Divergent Social Worlds: Neighborhood Crime and the Racial-Spatial Divide* (Russell Sage Foundation, 2010).

74 D. Simandan, “Competition, contingency, and destabilization in urban assemblages and actor-networks,” *Urban Geography* (2017).

production of social inequalities.”⁷⁵ In this sense, the increasing competition and ongoing loss of solidarity among drivers necessitates more than mobility theories. Because of the underlying enforcement of inequality, the decrease in services and worsening of working conditions neither represents the demand for fluid or structured mobility devices nor the reaction to increasing or decreasing migration flows. Instead, it is a direct consequence of exploitation-driven profit maximization in a non-regulated capitalist frame of an untamed commercial transportation market. Therefore, in order to answer the question of how a certain movement is legitimized or delegitimized, it needs to step beyond a solely ‘mobilities’ perspective.

With this in mind, this article points out the productive potential of merging perspectives of mobility and migration patterns based on empirical observations, but it also analyses the observed phenomena through structural deficits in the local transportation policy and enterprise organizations. In this sense, the empirical data proves that everyday mobility and migration patterns are not sufficiently explained by their processual performance. Instead, they need an integrative perspective on the unequal enterprise structure, beyond which both extremely exploitative working conditions and the backdrop for a societally mediated devaluation discourse of *marshrutka* performances are system-immanently produced.

This is particularly obvious when considering how the fluid mobility mode of *marshrutkas* mirrors the uncertain situation of its drivers and vice versa. Migrant transportation workers do indeed rely on fluid structures in the commercial transportation business, although this means that they have to accept the worst labor conditions. While *marshrutka* operators and vehicle fleet owners seem at first glance to profit from these developments, in the long run the decrease in services leads to stronger political efforts to abolish this form of transportation altogether. This decision, however, is made without considering the crucial need for an affordable and well-functioning transportation service for citizens, not to mention the long-term consequences for the urban development of an entirely collapsed public transportation network on manifold social levels.

75 T. Faist, “The mobility turn: a new paradigm for the social sciences?” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 36, no. 11 (2013): 1637–46.