



Russian Migration Research in Transnational Discourse: Theoretical and Empirical Aspects

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Abstract

Transmigration has been one of the most intensely studied and promising themes in contemporary migration research. In Russian historiography, transnationalism and transmigratory processes, with a certain delay, became the focus of research attention in the 2000s, and we are currently seeing a rise in publications on these phenomena. The mentioned delay can be accounted for by some objective historical processes which were taking place in the post-Soviet space, including intensification of migration flows and change in their quantitative and qualitative characteristics. The 1990s migration from post-Soviet countries, which consisted in constant movement (the Russians' mass return to their historical homeland; refugees trying to escape from ethnic conflicts and oppression, etc.), has now turned into temporary (transit and circular) labour and educational migration from "near-abroad" countries and beyond. According to the new UN DESA report, today, the Russian Federation (RF) ranks second in the world in terms of the number of migrants (12 million people) after the USA. Thus, integrating migrants already living in the country and regulating new arrivals is a pressing issue for Russia. The hypothesis behind the research presented here is based on distinguishing features of current migration processes in Russia. We hypothesise that Russian scholars choose different lines of research and theoretical approaches in transmigration research, compared to their international counterparts, due to the country's geopolitical position and the nature of transmigratory flows it experiences. Due to the article's limited volume, we cannot give a complete overview of Russian publications on transmigration issues here. Instead, we offer an analysis of transmigration scholarship in Russia, its methodological premises, and major trends in its development.

Keywords Transmigration · Russian historiography · Transnationalism · Transmigratory processes · Methodological nationalism · Cosmopolitanism · Superdiversity

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Introduction

Transmigration has been one of the most intensely studied and promising themes in contemporary migration research. In Russian historiography, transnationalism and transmigratory processes, with a certain delay, became the focus of research attention in the 2000s, and we are currently seeing a rise in publications on these phenomena.

The mentioned delay can be accounted for by some objective historical processes which were taking place in the post-Soviet space, including intensification of migration flows and change in their quantitative and qualitative characteristics. The 1990s migration from post-Soviet countries, which consisted in constant movement (the Russians' mass return to their historical homeland; refugees trying to escape from ethnic conflicts and oppression, etc.), has now turned into temporary (transit and circular) labour and educational migration from "near-abroad" countries¹ and beyond. According to the [new UN DESA report](#), today, the Russian Federation (RF) ranks second in the world in terms of the number of migrants (12 million people) after the USA. Thus, integrating migrants already living in the country and regulating new arrivals is a pressing issue for Russia.

The hypothesis behind the research presented here is based on distinguishing features of current migration processes in Russia. The current migration situation in Russia is characterised by the following geopolitical features: (1) Neighbourhood with such a large population state as China with a total Russian-Chinese border of 4209.3 km causes a massive Chinese migration to Russia, which ranks third after Uzbekistan and Tajikistan ([Selected Indicators 2018](#)). (2) The conflict in southeastern Ukraine led to large-scale flows of immigrants from this region to Russia. These flows were accompanied by facilitation of the visa regime and obtaining Russian citizenship. (3) Legal and illegal immigration from neighbouring countries to Russia continues. According to 2017, the Russian Federation ranks fourth in the number of immigrants in the world after the USA, Saudi Arabia, and Germany ([International Migration Report. 2017](#)).

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Theoretical Aspects in the Study of Transmigration and Transnationalism

At present, in Russian scholarship, we can see the previously established research approaches being reviewed, while mainly two conceptual lines of thinking seem to be

¹ The term "near-abroad countries", introduced after the collapse of the USSR in 1992 and widely used in Russian scientific and political discourse, is a collective name for 14 former Soviet republics including CIS countries, Baltic States, Ukraine, and Georgia.

adhered to the following: on the one hand, it is *methodological nationalism* (where “a norm is when a person stays within his/her state’s borders and crossing them is a violation of this norm”), *state-centred thinking* (with “interests of a state being a priority over those of an individual”), and *culture-centred thinking* (which “considers integration of migrants as a process of one-way cultural assimilation”); and on the other, concepts and approaches going beyond the state, which are put forward by European scholars—among these are *transnationalism*, *cosmopolitanism*, and *super-diversity* (Filippova 2016: pp. 314–319).

On 16 September 2016, there was a roundtable discussion held at I Tomsk Anthropological Forum (organised by the Laboratory for Social and Anthropological Research (LSAR) at National Research Tomsk State University in the city of Tomsk, Siberia, Russia) titled “Anthropology in Search of a New Language of Description” which was dedicated to issues in methodologies of research on integration of migrants in today’s world.

Leading researchers from across Russia, including Moscow and Saint Petersburg, as well as international scholars, took part in the discussion which was indeed indicative of the current methodological foundations of migration research in Russia. It was centred around the article titled “Discourse on Integration as a Conservative Anachronism of the Era of Transnationalism” written by Elena I. Filippova, Research Fellow at the Centre for Ethno-Political Studies (Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Russian Academy of Sciences) (Filippova 2016).

At this meeting, Elena I. Filippova criticised the main points of methodological nationalism—as she finds it unproductive to continue discussing the issue of integration in view of a widespread deep crisis of the modern nation state per se which has become outdated and no longer meets today’s needs—elaborating instead on the concepts of *transnationalism*, *cosmopolitanism*, and *super-diversity* developed by international scholars (M. Bommers, C. Lasch, S. Vertovec, R. Cohen, and others), and drew attention to a number of contemporary phenomena such as cross-border pendulum migrations, rising multiple identities, and migrant integration practices influenced not only by ethnic and cultural characteristics but also by gender, age, health, education, financial security, etc. (Deriglazova 2017: pp. 187–189, 196). Her perspective was shared by Otto Habeck who supported the concept of *super-diversity* and by Bhavna Dave who presented W. Kymlicka’s concept of *deep diversity*.

The opposing arguments presented at the meeting can be summarised as follows: the thesis as to the need to reject the integration discourse² in research and in social and political practice was criticised; the participants noted certain discrepancies in the concept of integration as understood by politicians, state authorities, mass media, migrants themselves, scholars, and the host society at large (Tsypylma Darieva); it was stressed that along with pendulum migration, there still exists classic migration,

² Should be noted that the integration discourse within the framework of methodological nationalism involves discussion of finding ways to adapt migrants to the needs and requirements of the host state, and “the figure of a migrant appears as a figure of the “absolute other”, destroying national identity, values, a familiar lifestyle, threatening the life and security of host societies” (see Deriglazova L.V. Is it possible to live aside the “Discourse ...” P. 185–186). While in the framework of transnational discourse, the problem is posed differently—is there a need to integrate migrants into the new national state of “reception”? Or is it enough to solve the problem of migrant loyalty to the receiving state in the juridical norms, i.e. following the laws of the country of residence while maintaining the mental, civilizational, and cultural differences.

with migrants coming in order to remain and applying different integration strategies to this end (Sergey N. Abashin); and also mentioned was the fact that issues of integration of immigrants remain at the top of the agenda in contemporary political practice and strategy of the European Union (Oleg V. Korneev).

The participants of the discussion pointed out the Eurocentricity of the concepts discussed by Elena I. Filippova in terms of understanding the interaction of different cultures and social groups in the same society (Akhmet Yarlykapov and Tsypylma Darieva). A number of examples of regions (e.g. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, and Turkey) experiencing mass migrations were discussed along with immigration practices used therein which in fact differ from European ones; it was noted that there is no such problem as migrant integration there, and behavioural strategies of migrants are completely different (Akhmet Yarlykapov). The thesis on “the crisis of national statehood” was also heatedly debated. In this regard, Filippova’s opponents stressed that the crisis of contemporary Europe’s statehood does not mean there is a crisis of statehood as such; be that as it may, any crisis is also associated with searching for new forms, concepts, and strategies, and a new model of a state can produce new models of integration policy (Viktor I. Diatlov). The question was raised as to how the concept of “the crisis of the nation state” can be applied to Russia, and some Russian cases were discussed that cannot be described by means of “the language of the European nation state” (Sergey N. Abashin).

Finally, the participants agreed that the critique of the concept of integration should not lead to abolishing the concept whatsoever, and that it was important to recognise the existence of different languages and methodological tools in research on immigration practices. “Integration”, as it was also agreed, should be seen as something more than just integration in the nation state’s society, meaning, among other things, the creation of any social structures, networks, and relationships that enable migrants to live in a new place and satisfy their needs. Thus, research on integration should be based on a clearly defined concept of integration and a concrete historical context of any integration policy implemented (Sergey N. Abashin, Elena I. Filippova, Larisa V. Deriglazova, and others) (Deriglazova 2017: pp. 190–201). This position of a part of the scientific community proves the readiness of Russian scientists to use new approaches in studying the phenomenon of migration, while preserving the tools of methodological nationalism and other approaches used in the analysis of migration processes that are relevant at the present stage.

Discussions like the one held at Tomsk indicate the fact that Russian migration researchers do not just adopt European theoretical concepts but critically rethink them in terms of their possible use in the analysis of migration realities in Russia and beyond. This helps us to more accurately delineate the scope of applicability of non-state approaches and concepts and show when they either work or not.

Western theoretical conceptions rethought through the prism of Russian historical realities and a critical analysis of these can be found in a number of other publications as well.

Sergey N. Abashin, for example, actively uses the concept of transnationalism when studying Central Asian migrants and underlines that integration practices are not excluded from a variety of strategies deployed by transmigrants who retain close ties with their countries of origin: “They study the Russian language, explore urban and rural spaces of Russia, establish and expand their relationships with locals, etc.”

(Abashin 2017b: p. 218). In his research on Central Asia, he creates a classification of models of circular cross-border mobility (periodic, long, rotational), and characterises practices such as preparedness for return, deportability, and nostalgia for migration and the cross-border style of life (Abashin 2017a). Abashin draws a lot of attention to such a mass phenomenon as voluntary or forced reverse migration. He suggests that migration practices and narratives should be looked at from the point of view of family scenarios considered normative in a particular country of origin (Abashin 2015, 2016), and uses as a category of analysis the notion of “home” as a fundamental embodiment of the idea of return because it “incorporates symbolic, social, emotional, and purely material aspects” (Abashin 2015: 126).

Russian scholars generally point to the need to address the concept of locality (with its both territorial and social dimensions) as the main focus of research on everyday life practices and identity of transnational migrants (Abashin 2012: pp. 10–11; Diatlov 2009). “It is evident that migranhood can form differently in different regions of Russia. What takes place in Moscow is not identical to what occurs in central regions of the European part of the country or in Povolzhie, and a totally different picture can be seen in the Southern Urals and Western Siberia, as well as in the Far East and the Caucasus. <...> Moreover, within these regions there should also be a differentiation made between cities with a population of over a million with their suburbs, provincial towns, and villages. And within the same locality, migrant trade groups differ from building workers brigades and student associations” (Abashin 2012: p. 10). This confirms the integrative approaches existing in Russian scientific practice in studying the phenomenon of transnational migration, which suggests, along with the theory of transnationalism, the use of additional approaches that meet certain research goals.

In Liudmila Iu. Kochetkova’s research, the notion of transnational social fields is analysed which is generally understudied in Russian historiography; by it she means “a set of numerous interrelated systems of social relations that transcend state borders through which ideas, customs, and resources are exchanged, organised, and changed” (Kochetkova 2013: p. 25). She notes that transnational social fields enable migrants to carry out different kinds of economic, political, and socio-cultural activities including informal trade between countries, small business, investing in developing economies, running tourism business abroad, and so forth. Given the variety of manifestations of transnational fields, she calls to “consider all the levels of transnational fields and keep track of historical continuity of this process” in order to understand models of adaptation of immigrants in the host society (Kochetkova 2013: pp. 25, 28). Maria S. Savoskul also conducts research in this direction and explores the theme of transnational relationships and transnational fields. In her work, drawing on the study of international migrations of population, she presents a concept of territorial migration systems (TMS). This concept seeks to explain patterns in international exchange between Russia and other countries; it can also be applied in forecasting international migrations. Savoskul’s contribution to migration research consists in her thesis that, taking into account Russia’s great regional diversity, of importance for the country is the fact that included in international TMSs are not countries as separate entities but regions within those countries. This thesis of hers is for the first time introduced to international migration theories in which no other hierarchical levels are usually considered except that of countries (Savoskul 2010, 2015, 2016). It is noteworthy that, unlike the historians, ethnologists, and anthropologists mentioned above, both

Kochetkova and Savoskul are geographers by training, and that points to the fact that researchers from very different fields of knowledge become involved in studying transnationalism.

Elena A. Ostrovskaia analyses intercultural interaction between transnational communication networks of religious ideologies (Ostrovskaia 2010). She draws attention to the ambiguous character of the concept of transnational fields (put forward in the 1970s) and the notion of the deterritorialised nation state associated with it. She also notes that in theoretical terms, both concepts entail the conclusion that “social interactions of transnational actors which transcend state and territorial borders are not the only indication of existence of the transnational social space” (Ostrovskaia 2010: p. 176). Ostrovskaia uses the term “transnational identity” which, she believes, comes into being as a result of constant interaction of migrants across national and territorial borders. In the course of such interaction, migrants influence one another, exchange values and convictions, and this results in their identity undergoing certain changes (Ostrovskaia 2010: p. 176). In the transnational framework, Ostrovskaia proposed the concept of transnational communication networks of religious ideologies whose theoretical and methodological significance “consists in its applicability in sociological research on contemporary processes of reinstitutionalisation of traditional religions in the global space of ideologies” (Ostrovskaia 2010: p. 177).

Irina V. Ivakhniuk, on her part, makes substantial corrections to migration theory without deploying transnational terminology but applying the international relations paradigm instead. She introduces the notion of “Eurasian Migration System” (EMS) and identifies factors of its formation and functioning. EMS is defined by her as “a group of post-Soviet countries connected with one another through stable and large migratory flows which are conditioned by a number of factors including historical, economic, political, demographic, socio-ethnic, and geographical” (Ivakhniuk 2008: p. 22). The researcher underlines that international scholarship on migration, as well as educational courses on migration at top universities, is limited in its analysis of migrations in today’s world to the regions of North America, Europe, Asia Pacific, Middle East, and South America, and thus “does not notice” the vast post-Soviet area where patterns specific to EMS have already formed (Ivakhniuk 2008: p. 22). In this context, the concept of “migration interdependence” acquires importance, introduced by Ivakhniuk to reflect mutual dependence of both countries of origin and of destination for migrants (Ivakhniuk 2011: p. 69).

It is clear that the researchers referred to above do not represent the whole spectrum of Russian academic discourse on theoretical issues in transmigration research; however, their work allows us to speak of interdisciplinary character of this research, its orientation to constructive and critical comprehension of international scholarship, and introduction of new aspects to the study of cross-border migrations, while drawing on realities of the Russian (and post-Soviet) space.

An Analysis of Western Academic Discourse on Migration Research

Russian scholars gain knowledge on current developments in migration theory through analysing academic discourse on migration theory (in terms of problem statement, methodologies, and identification of recent research lines) and on migration and

integration policy in other countries, especially in the EU. Great attention paid by international research, political and expert communities to Europe is easily explainable: it is a complex of various migration issues unfolding in the EU countries that is particularly well-known worldwide.

A comprehensive overview of theoretical developments in Western scholarship on migration in the last third of the twentieth to the early twenty-first centuries, titled “Razvitie migratsionnoi teorii v usloviiakh globalizatsii” (*Migration Theory and Globalisation*), was made by Irina V. Ivakhniuk (Ivakhniuk 2015, 2016). In the first part of it, she turns to different theoretical approaches such as neoclassical theory, structural-and-historical approach, the concept of dependent development, push-and-pull theory, the new economic theory of migration, the concept of mobile transition, regionalisation of migration, and so-called migration hump. In the second part of her work, Ivakhniuk explores theory of migration networks (or theory of social capital), cumulative causality theory, and the concepts of migration systems and migration interdependence.

In their work titled “Teoreticheskie aspekty migratsii naseleniia: evoliutsiia podkhodov i nauchnykh shkol” (*Theoretical Aspects of Migration: an Evolution of Approaches of Schools of Thought*), Oksana B. Chernega and Irina S. Bondarenko analyse, along with Russian migration scholarship, theoretical legacy of both European and American scholars, namely, E.G. Ravenstein, E. Lee, J. Harris and M. Todaro, W. Thomas and F. Znaniecki, R. Park, E. Burgess, R. McKenzie, and J.K. Galbraith (Chernega and Bondarenko 2016).

In her article titled “Teorii migratsii: ot assimiliatsii k transnatsionalizmu” (*Theories of Migration: from Assimilation to Transnationalism*) and dedicated to Western European and American theories of migration, Veronika V. Kostenko identifies contradictions in American and European approaches to migration research (Kostenko 2014). In the work of Andrei L. Bardin and Sviatoslav V. Shachin respectively, the dynamic of German research on migration and integration of immigrants from 2015 to 2016 is shown, and an overview is given of theoretical discussions on migration issues and multiculturalism in the Frankfurt school (Bardin 2016; Shachin 2018).

In 2016, a collective monograph was published under the title “Trudovaia migratsiia i politika integratsii migrantov v Germanii i Rossii” (*Labour Migration and the Politics of Migrant Integration in Germany and Russia*) (Roanova 2016) featuring scholars from the Netherlands (Jan Cremers) and Germany (Hans Dietrich von Löffelholz, Friedrich Heckmann, Ingrid Wilkens, and Ferry Pausch). The monograph draws on the proceedings of an international conference that took part at Saint Petersburg State University on 9–10 April 2015 (Saint Petersburg, Russia) and presents scientific approaches to implementing migration and integration policies. It analyses concrete cases of regional programmes on migrant adaptation and integration, along with general problems of forming public opinion about migration policy and practice in Russia and Germany.

Vladimir S. Malakhov also addresses the theme of migrant integration as discussed in Western academic literature in his book “Integratsiia migrantov: kontseptsii i praktiki” (*Integration of Migrants: Concepts and Practices*), the first part of which deals with the conceptual dimension of integration of migrants. Here, he compares North-American (USA and Canada) and European approaches and raises the issue of migration and methodological nationalism (state-centrism) (Malakhov 2015).

Thus, around the mid-2010s, Russian researchers were actively reading on contemporary theories and research on migration developed by their European and North-American counterparts; they also systematised, analysed, and published their writings on this scholarship in Russian. It is noteworthy that current works of international scholars are often published in Russian in the form of individual or joint (together with their Russian fellow researchers) publications (in monographs and collections of papers).

Russian Migration Research in Transnational Discourse

In the context of the intensification of international migration, processes of greatest interest for the Russian scientific community have become the concept of transnationalism due to the scale, economic, and social significance of transmigration processes and the expansion of transnational social spaces and social practices in Russian society.

The theme of migration in transnational discourse is the focus of multiple studies: special research projects are implemented (including together with international researchers), and research conferences are held. The majority of writings come out as scientific articles and overviews, including in specialised collections; monographs, as a rule, are published as collective and are rather scarce.

Special Research Projects Migration discourse in Russia is not as politicised as in the EU (Bardin and Pantin 2017).

Nevertheless, the Russian government shows their interest in contemporary migration research. In 2014, within a broader research funding scheme, they supported the project titled “Transnationalism and Migration Processes: Comparative and Institutional Analysis” (TANDEM) for the creation of a world-class thematic research laboratory at Saint Petersburg State University. On the American part, the laboratory is headed by Peter John Kivisto (Richard A. Swanson Professor of Social Thought, Chair of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Welfare at Augustana College (USA), and Finland Distinguished Professor at the University of Turku). It positions itself as a collective involved in fundamental interdisciplinary scientific research on transnationalism and migration and multi-level theoretical and empirical comparative analysis of phenomena and processes of transnational migration. It also does applied sociological research (*Chem my zanimaemsia...*). An analysis of the projects run by the Laboratory (“Transnationalism as a Means of Integration: a Comparative Analysis of Everyday Life of Migrants in Middle-Sized and Big Cities of Russia”, “The Impact of Transnational Labour Migration on the Structure of Human Capital in Russia”, etc.) allows concluding that these are largely of empirical nature (*Issledovatel'skie proekty...*). However, there have also been steps made to specify methodological foundations of interdisciplinary research on contemporary migration and to apply new theoretical frameworks in studying its particular phenomena using the transnationalism methodology. Over three years of its operation, the Laboratory has published around 50 scientific writings of its staff (including monographs) which are available on the Laboratory's official website.

In 2018, a new research project was launched at National Research Tomsk State University (TSU) titled “Migrations and Diasporas in Trans-Border Spaces:

Interdisciplinary Studies”. It aims to conduct interdisciplinary research on migrations and diasporas from the transnationalism perspective, based on case studies of countries and regions in different historical periods (as well as comparative migration research at the intersection of different disciplines and scientific traditions). The project is supported by the D.I. Mendeleev Scientific Foundation under the TSU Competitiveness Improvement Programme ([Nauchnyi fond...](#)).

The Non-Commercial Partnership “Russian International Affairs Council” (RIAC) jointly with the Centre for Strategic Development are currently implementing a project “International Migration Processes: Trends, Challenges, and Prospects” ([-Mezhdunarodnye migratsionnye protsessy...](#)). Involved in the project are renowned Russian specialists in migration, including transmigration research, such as Irina Ivakhniuk, Vladimir Malakhov, Ekaterina Demintseva, and Vladimir Mukomel. It analyses key global and regional migration trends, assesses risks for Russia and its international partners, and prepares recommendations in terms of developing international cooperation in the field of migration. The project results produced over 2017 are as follows: an annual report (“Propositions on Russia’s Migration Strategy 2035”), working papers (“Accession of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan to the Eurasian Economic Union: Impact on Migration”, “Integration of Migrants: European Experience and Russia’s Prospects”, “The Politics of Migrant Integration in Russia: Challenges, Potential, and Risks”), analytical notes (“Migration Crisis: International Cooperation and National Strategies”), study materials, analytics, interviews, etc. All these are available on the RIAC’s website.

The implementation of these and other projects on contemporary migration processes being financially supported by the state foundations is clearly indicative of special attention paid to the theme by both the Russian research community and the Russian state.

Conferences on Transmigration Research Over the last years, transmigration has become the subject of special consideration at all-Russian and international scientific conferences held in Russia. Below, we shall overview the most prominent of these.

On 24–25 September 2015, an international conference “Transnational Migrations, Contemporary States, and Economic Turbulence” (Malakhov and Simon 2016) took place in Russia. According to the organisers, the conference’s main goal was “to rethink the role that international migration plays for our country [Russia] and to find a new language for discussing this phenomenon. The experience gained by many advanced countries of the world shows that migration is not so much about being a threat as it is about being a potential for development. This is our premise: external migration can and must be considered, first and foremost, as a chance and a resource – a chance for overcoming the crisis and a resource for social and economic development. In order to take advantage of it, we have to revisit the established approaches” (Malakhov and Simon 2016: p. 7).

On 26–27 October 2017, National Research University “Higher School of Economics” (Moscow) conducted an international conference titled “Migration: New Trends and Directions”. During the conference, there was a panel held under the title “The Phenomenon of Transnationalism in Contemporary Migrations and Research on it”. Also, there were a series of related thematic key presentations delivered, such as “Double Narratives of Doubled Reality? On the Methodology of Studying

Transnationalism” by Olga Brednikova; “Transnational Perspective in the Study of International Migration to Russia: How to Overcome Methodological Nationalism?” by Sergey Abashin. These scientific reports demonstrate the interest of Russian scientists in understanding transnational perspectives in studying international migration ([-Mezhdunarodnaia konferentsiia...](#)).

On 11–13 October 2018, the Laboratory for Social and Anthropological Research and the Department of Anthropology and Ethnology (National Research Tomsk State University, Tomsk, Russia) held II Tomsk Anthropological Forum titled “The Anthropology of Interdisciplinarity” in the frame of the project “Migrations and Diasporas in Trans-Border Spaces: Interdisciplinary Studies”. During the Forum, a symposium on “Migrations, Diasporas, and Transnationalism” took place. Along with the discussion of a wide range of problems related to the study of various aspects of transnational migration, a considerable attention was paid to the discussion of the phenomenon of interdisciplinarity and approaches to its study ([Anthropology of interdisciplinarity, 2018](#)).

The scope, areas of work, and the content of the conferences, as well as the status of their organisers and participants, indicate that Russian science has a strong interest in the phenomenon of transnationalism and the methodology of its research, as well as the relevance and importance of transnational studies in terms of the practical implementation of migration and integration policies in Russia.

Collective Monographs and Specialised Research Collections Out of monographs and collections dedicated specifically to the issue of transnational migrations and published as either collective writings per se or proceedings of scientific conferences, we would like to focus on the following ones: “Regional Dimension of Trans-Border Migration to Russia” (Golunov 2008), “Trans-Border Migrations and the Host Society: Mechanisms and Practices of Mutual Adaptation” (Diatlov 2009), “Current Issues in Transnationalism and Migration Research” (Kivisto and Rezaev 2015; Rezaev and Kivisto 2016), “Transnational Migrations, Contemporary States, and Economic Turbulence” (Malakhov and Simon 2016), and “Trans-Border Migrations in the Mongolian World: Strategies and Practices of Transcultural Interaction” (Baldano and Diatlov 2017).

The collective monograph “Regional Dimension of Trans-Border Migration to Russia” resulted from a research project “Functions of Borders and Effects of Migrations: Security, Development, and Integration” fulfilled in 2007 at the Russian charity organisation “INO-Centre (Information. Science. Education)”. It discusses problems of external migration to Russia from territories of post-Soviet countries and China through its three stages: emigration, crossing Russian borders, and migrant integration in the host society. The authors identify conditions of and prerequisites for formation of migratory flows in donor countries; Russian borders are seen as a regulator of migration processes; and regional practices of mutual adaptation used by migrants and the host society are studied (Golunov 2008).

The collective monograph “Trans-Border Migrations and the Host Society: Mechanisms and Practices of Mutual Adaptation” explores issues of mutual adaptation of trans-border migrants and the Russian society. It was published under the programme “Interregional Research in Social Sciences” run jointly by the Russian Ministry of Education and Science, the INO-Centre (Information. Science. Education), and the Kennan Institute of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars supported

by the Carnegie Corporation in New York (USA) and John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation (USA). The authors of the monograph apply a comparative approach to studying migration in Russian regions. Their attention is focused on aspects such as regional migration policy, the role of print media, migrants' influence on regional labour markets, the role of intermediaries in adaptation of migrants, the dynamic of development of "ethnic markets", the role of universities as adaptation mechanisms, and problems of adaptation of trans-border migrant children in Russia (Diatlov 2009).

An international group of authors at a Saint Petersburg State University Laboratory called "Transnationalism and Migration Processes: Comparative and Institutional Analysis" issued a collection of scientific works titled "Current Issues in Transnationalism and Migration Research" (in two volumes). Volume I consists of three sections: "Labour Migration: Institutions and Inequalities", "Migration Processes and Transnational Practices", and "Transnationalism after Nation States". These sections contain theoretical and empirical case studies of institutions and practices of labour and educational migration as well as social analytics on the emergence and reproduction of transnationalism phenomena in today's world. Volume II titled "Theory, Methodology, and Empirical Aspects of Comparative Research: Poetics and Practice" is comprised of two sections: "Theoretical Poetics" and "Empirical Practice". The first section elaborates on new terminology used in sociological research, fundamental characteristics of migrants, and theoretical foundations of comparative quantitative studies of nations and nationalism. The second section discusses methodological issues of empirical research, collection of quantitative and qualitative data in research practice, domestic and external relevance of migration studies, etc. (Kivisto and Rezaev 2015; Rezaev and Kivisto 2016).

Published in 2016, the international conference proceedings titled "Transnational Migrations, Contemporary States, and Economic Turbulence" include three thematic parts whose headings reflect their content very well: "Transnational Migrations in the 21st Century: Theory and Practice", "Transnational Migrations and Economic Turbulence", and "Socio-Cultural and Political Effects and Transnational Migrations". The first part of the book contains articles by Western fellow researchers, including Rainer Bauböck (Professor of European University Institute (Florence, Italy)) and Thomas Faist (Professor of University of Bielefeld (Germany)), as well as a joint writing by Aleksandra Alund, Carl-Ulrik Schierup, and Anders Neergard (Institute for Research on Migration, Ethnicity and Society (REMESO) at Linköping University (Sweden)). It is worth noting that these proceedings are written in a particular style of writing characteristic of international scientific texts and draw on international scholars' works, which can be seen as an attempt to synthesise Russian and international scholarship, be up-to-date, discuss most topical issues, and try to find solutions to problems whose nature seems to be universal (Malakhov and Simon 2016).

Russian scholars' attention in the context of transmigration research over the last years has been particularly drawn to the Mongolian world. In 2017, a collection of scientific papers and a collective monograph came out in the framework of the research project "Migrations and Diasporas in the Mongolian World: Strategies and Practices of Transcultural Interaction" supported by the Russian Foundation for Fundamental Research. The former, titled "Trans-Border Migrations in the Mongolian World: History and the Present", studies ethno-migration and diaspora processes in the

Mongolian world, describes practices of interaction between migrants and the host society and immigrant communities' strategies of adaptation; it also seeks to explore distinguishing regional characteristics and self-organisation of Mongolian diasporas and their institutionalisation in some countries of Asia, Europe, and America (Baldano et al. 2017). The monograph "Migrations and Diasporas in the Mongolian World: Strategies and Practices of Transcultural Interaction" is, in turn, dedicated to the analysis of migration processes in the historical-and-cultural Mongolian world divided by several state borders. Its authors consider migrations within the Mongolian world and beyond, as well as how this world becomes integrated in global migration processes. They analyse practices of migrant adaptation to the host society, strategies of constructing migrant communities, and formation and functioning of translocal structures; they also discuss the influence of diasporic communities on sending and receiving societies and processes of such communities' institutionalisation (Baldano and Diatlov 2017).

In recent years, there were a number of publications out where the theme of transmigrations was not the key one, but was considered among others. One of these is a collection of articles titled "Migration Crisis: International Cooperation and National Strategies" (Malakhov and Simon 2017). The collection consists of four sections: "Migration Crisis: Causes and Consequences", "Evolution of Mechanisms of State Migration Regulation", "Diasporas as a Bureaucratic and Political Tool", and "Transnational Networks of Migrants: Social and Economic Aspects". The fourth section is of particular interest; it explores transnational relationships of Russian-speaking immigrants in Germany, the religious life of Tajik labour migrants in Russia, and migrants from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in the Russian labour market. The collection is noticeable for its clear structure, research novelty and methodology, problem statement, overview of historiography, content as such, and conclusions.

The monographs and collections on transmigrations reviewed above are, as a rule, a result of joint work of large and often international groups of scholars who are involved in research projects financially supported by both Russian and international foundations.

Studying Transit Migration Despite the fact that the term "transit migrants" has only been recently introduced to Russian scholarship (in the 1990s), the phenomenon of transit migration has been paid special attention to due to the length of Russian borders and the country's geopolitical position.

Russian scholars seek to *rethink the concept and theoretical foundations of transit migration research*. Tatiana I. Trofimova in her work titled "The Phenomenon of Transit Migration" shows the evolution of the term "transit migration" and studies specific features of the phenomenon during the world economic crisis; she also characterises the reasons behind transit migration through the territory of Russia and its consequences for the country (Trofimova 2010).

The authors of a publication, titled "The Phenomenon of Migration and Major Theses of Modern Transitology", call for sociological rethinking of transit migration and stress the need for developing effective theoretical and methodological approaches to its analysis (Cherepanova et al. 2017b). According to them, "modern transitology allows considering migration from a new perspective, with an orientation not only to local components of migrant movement but also to the dynamic of transformation of

migrants' statuses, values, and other important elements which generally determine its consequences" (Cherepanova et al. 2017b: p. 228). Such an approach to the analysis of migration allows adequately reflect objective and subjective factors of social security.

Another topic of interest in this context is *legal regulation of transit migration* (see, for example, Surma 2012; Bekiashev and Ivanov 2013; and Primova 2015). Here, Russian researchers study the experience of the EU where there is a single formal migration policy which in some cases, though, contradicts national migration regulations (Primova 2015: p. 185). They are particularly attentive to the issue of internal and external EU borders. For example, they indicate that the abolition of internal borders under the Schengen scheme has led to "to the elimination of border control on the borders between the Union member states" and to stricter protection of the EU external borders. As a result, "all these measures have increased economic and administrative burden on border and transit countries". The situation that came about shows that the EU wants immigration problems to be dealt with outside the Union, that is, in transit countries" (Surma 2012: p. 127). Thus, for the EU, problems of transit migration go beyond its borders and directly affect adjacent states, and that needs to be comprehended in both scientific and socio-political terms.

Issues of legal regulation of transit migration are researched in Russia as well. There are scholars who analyse Russian legislation and law enforcement in the field of transit movement of foreign citizens and persons without citizenship across the Russian Federation; and measures are proposed towards improvement of relevant migration laws in order to lower risks associated with irregular migration and to protect constitutional rights and legitimate interests of immigrants (Galiakhmetova 2016). Also, described are legal measures that irregular migrants are subject to as a result of their violating migration rules established by the Russian legislation, as well as problems occurring when these measures are enforced (Zobova 2015).

Another important line of research is the influence of transit migration on Russia's border regions which have long now been "absorbing" different migratory flows, primarily from Asian countries, and which encounter the issues of transit and irregular migration, drug trafficking, etc. Researchers note that "today, the Russian Federation is a territory receiving 'transit' migrants and a state providing transit corridors for international partners. In this regard, certain difficulties emerge at the level of socio-cultural, socio-economic, and legal relations in border territories" (Makarov et al. 2018: p. 13). For example, the increasing potential of such threats in the case of Russia and China poses questions regarding "social adaptation and economic and border interaction <...>, institutions of social adaptation of migrants and improving relations between countries" (Makarov and Zhukova 2017: p. 53).

Another example is the region of Astrakhan with its complex migration situation due to its geographical position as a Russian border region, its proximity to the Caspian states, the republics of the North Caucasus, and the countries of Transcaucasia, as well as due to political, religious, ethnic, and social processes taking place there. The region acts as a zone for transit migratory flows one part of which remains in its territory, whereas the other continues to move further into the country (Aidaraliev and Shvedova 2017: p. 122).

One more example of Russian border territories is the region of Altai. When studying its place and role as a "boundary territory" exposed to migration flows, researchers explore questions concerning attitudes of the region's population to

migrants in sociological surveys and through identifying social implications of migratory flows as well as a balance between their positive and disintegrating components. They think that the local population's specific stance towards migrants and migration is reflected in socio-economic tensions in the region of Altai. An indicator of that are specific local perceptions of the ethnically different other linked to social hierarchy and mobility and accounted for by objective living conditions of the population in the region (Cherepanova et al. 2017a: pp. 151, 156).

Ethnic diasporas and their interaction with the population of border regions are also studied, and scholars conclude that there is a latent conflict potential associated with inter-ethnic tensions and lack of positive attitude towards migrants. This indicates the presence of regional social tensions, "the dominant population's low adaptability", and undermines positive aspects of migration in Russia (Cherepanova et al. 2018: p. 308).

The themes referred to above are primarily discussed in writings of historians and thus their research focus is migrants' impact on the regions' socio-economic well-being, mitigation of threats from the point of view of security, and prevention of direct conflicts between migrants and the host society. Such writings, however, lack the synthesis of concrete historical material accumulated by historians and conceptualisations made by social anthropologists.

It is worth noting that an increase in Russian publications on transit migration practically does not result in greater specification of most complex methodological issues. Perhaps, quantity is yet to turn into quality, and what seems to restrain such a turn is a number of conceptual and methodological difficulties. Firstly, so far, there has been no universal definition of transit migration put forward. What may be meant by this term is, for example, "a sub-category of irregular migration that is difficult to define" (Migration: ...). The International Organisation for Migration defines transit migration as a "a short-term phenomenon, with pre-defined routes and without the intention of remaining in the country of transit" (Migration: ...). In broad sense, this term is understood as "migration that includes a route across more than two countries" (Glushchenko 2005: p. 51; Migration...) and so forth. Secondly, researchers point to a "flowing" nature of transit migration which may "turn" into the category of irregular migration, for example, if the migrant remains in the country of transit after his/her visa has expired or for other reasons. Thirdly, the list of "transit" countries is constantly changing and does not depend only on geographical factors. Fourthly, transit migrants' motives are not always obvious, and that influences the general assessment of their route, including countries of transit and destination. Fifthly, the issue of policy towards transit migrants is also not unambiguous—it is not clear whether steps should be taken with regards to "resettlement and integration of migrants who are in a particular country of transit, or some other approach should be proposed" (Molodikova and Diuvel' 2009: p. 19). And sixthly, at a conceptual level, transit migration is seen as a politicised phenomenon that complicates objective scientific analysis of this category of migrants.

The main bulk of the work of Russian scientists in the field of transmigration studies relates to the study of Russia as a host country (analysis of migration processes in the post-Soviet territory, the economic component of transnational migration, the interaction of the state and transnational communities, the impact of transnational networks on intercultural interaction, etc.). This may be due, on the one hand, to the specifics of the current migration situation in the country, on the other hand, to the continuing influence of the Soviet methodological tradition, the main focus of which, due to the geopolitical

and social conditions of its development, there were processes of internal migration (Stepanov 2018: pp. 117–118).

Conclusion

To sum up, the overview of major lines of research in Russian historiography on transmigration helps us draw the following conclusions:

- (1) In social sciences and the humanities in Russia, transnationalism and transmigration processes became the focus of research with a certain “delay” in the 2000s, and these themes are being increasingly published on at present. Many studies have been dedicated to transmigration. Specialised scientific collections and collective monographs are being published by groups of researchers, including international ones, involved in research projects implemented with financial support from Russian and international scientific foundations.
- (2) The overview of discussions going on among Russian researchers on theoretical problems of transmigration research and empirical publications issued so far indicates that these are of interdisciplinary character. Transnationalism and transmigration are of interest to researchers from different fields such as anthropology, history, political science, sociology, cultural research, and others (see [Annex](#)). On the one hand, this stimulates diverse studies of transnational migration, on the other though, this results in the complexity and current impossibility of a deep synthesis of theoretical and empirical material.
- (3) Russian scholars become familiar with theoretical legacy and contemporary research experience of their international counterparts in the field of migration by reading the latter’s work and through direct cooperation (implementing joint research projects, participating in international scientific conferences, and publishing together in Russian scientific collections and collective monographs). Russian scholars seek to constructively and critically rethink international scholarship and introduce new aspects to the study of transmigration taking into account Russian (and post-Soviet) realities.
- (4) In Russian scientific discourse, the theme of transmigration is considered in the context of both broader globalisation processes and increased migratory flows and the Russian state’s distinguishing problems. These problems include the acute demographic situation which requires additional labour force and—due to historical and geographical reasons—the significance of borders: the length of borders makes the government of the country pay increased attention to their protection and to mitigation of risks of intrusion on the part of criminals and terrorists. This explains why issues of transmigration are widely discussed by Russian scholars and experts.
- (5) Studies of Russian authors cover a fairly wide range of problems and are conducted in the following areas: analysis of Western academic discourse in the field of transmigration research and the development of their own theoretical concepts and concepts (for example, “Eurasian Migration System”); transnational migration in Russian society, its political, legal, economic, and cultural aspects (theoretical and applied aspects); transnational social networks of Russian emigrants in the countries of the West and the former republics of the USSR;

transnational migration abroad (special attention is paid to the EU and European states). The main actors of research are representatives of academic institutions and university communities: both individual researchers and teams of scientists in the framework of research centres and research laboratories.

Overall, Russian researchers are actively exploring international experience in transmigration and transnationalism; their work helps to complement and specify possible ways of applying the existing conceptual principles in this field and to set new directions of research on different aspects of migration.

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Annex

The area of scientific specialization of the authors cited in the article (indicating the Russian index of scientific citation - RSCI), number of citations, and Hirsch index.

The article doesn't indicate authors whose data, according to the selected criteria, were not found

This table was compiled by the authors on the basis of RSCI (elibrary.ru)

Name	Field of scientific specialization	Citations	H-Index
Abashin, S.N.	Historian ethnologist, anthropologist	1337	12
Shvedova, I.N.	Economist geographer	151	2
Diatlov, V.I.	Historian, anthropologist	1129	12
Bardin, A.L.	Political scientist	215	7
Pantin, V.I.	Political scientist, philosopher	5511	33
Bekiashev, D.K.	Lawyer, political scientist	787	13
Ivanov, D.V.	Lawyer, political scientist	397	12
Cherepanova, M.I.	Sociologist	203	5
Maksimova, A.E.,	Sociologist	1457	20
Saryglar, S.A.	Sociologist	12	2
Gorbunova, A.A.	Sociologist	23	2
Deriglazova, L.V.	Historian	208	7
Filippova, E.I.	Ethnologist, anthropologist	1671	23
Glushchenko, G.	Economist, geographer	686	10
Ivakhniuk, I.V.	Economist, anthropologist	690	9
Kostenko, V.V.	Sociologist, political scientist	106	4
Makarov, A.V.	Economist, lawyer	582	12
Rudyi, N.K.	Lawyer	85	5
Zhukova, A.S.	Lawyer	95	7
Malakhov, V.S.	Philosopher, sociologist anthropologist	3099	17
Ostrovskaya, E.A.	Sociologist	422	7
Primova, E.N.	Historian, lawyer	80	5

Name	Field of scientific specialization	Citations	H-Index
Savoskul, M.S.	Geographer	548	9
Shachin, S.	Philosopher, political scientist	64	3
Surma, I.V.	Economist	1305	23
Trofimova, T.I.	Economist	45	3
Stepanov, A.M.	Sociologist	5	1

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