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Imagining the Russian Nation: Who, According to the Residents of Russia, Constitute Russian Society, and Can an Outsider Become its Member?

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Abstract. This article presents the outcomes of a study that investigates the perceptions among residents of Russia regarding their membership in the Russian nation or society. The study employs interviews (100) and focus groups (40), carried out across five regions of Russia, as its primary data collection methods. The key methodological approach was to pose questions about societal membership and the integration of various migrant types into Russian society, thus revealing underlying beliefs about the criteria for belonging to the Russian nation or society. This approach was especially insightful for understanding perceptions about groups that are typically not questioned about their societal membership. The study identifies two distinct types of societal membership: "organic" and "acquired". Organic membership is socially ascribed to individuals born in Russia or those with ancestors born in Russia. This category often overlaps with national identity, rendering ethnic Russians born in Russia the quintessential members of Russian society. However, organic membership is not exclusively reserved for ethnic Russians; it extends to other ethnic groups considered part of "the peoples of Russia", though they are seen as less typical members. Interestingly, the perception of these membership categories varies between regions with distinct national identities and those without such distinctions. Acquired membership, on the other hand, is contingent upon fulfilling specific criteria, such as familiarity with Russian (or regional) culture and a desire to be part of Russian society. Exceptionally, notable achievements can override these criteria. Unlike organic members, individuals with acquired membership can lose their societal status, except in cases of betrayal, which is nearly impossible for organic members. The findings are contextualized within citizenship studies, positing that the described constructs serve as a foundation for the institution of citizenship rather than the converse. Additionally, the study contributes to the ongoing cognitive turn in ethnicity research, offering new insights into the conceptualization of national and societal belonging.

Keywords: ethnicity, nation, constructivism, imagination, Russian society

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Воображая российскую нацию: кто, с точки зрения жителей России, является частью российского общества и можно ли стать его частью?

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Аннотация. Представлены результаты исследования, посвященного представлениям жителей России о членстве в российской нации/российском обществе. Эти представления были эксплицированы посредством интервью (100) и фокус-групп (40), проведенных в 5 регионах России. Основной методологический прием исследования состоял в том, что вопросы задавались о членстве в российском обществе и возможности вступления в него разного типа мигрантов, и за счет ответа на этот вопросы эксплицировались представления о принципах членства в российской нации/российском обществе в целом, в том числе применительно к тем, в отношении кого этот вопрос обычно не ставится. Согласно результатам, есть два типа членства: «органическое» и «приобретенное». «Органическое» членство атрибутируется общественным сознанием тем, кто родился в России и/или чьи родственники по восходящей линии родились в России. Последняя характеристика часто обобщается с помощью национальных категорий, в результате чего наиболее типичным членом российского общества является русский, родившийся в России, однако в «органическом» членстве в российском обществе не отказывается и представителям «народов России». Они, впрочем, являются менее типичными представителями российского общества. Эта совокупность конструктов, кроме того, различается в «национальных» регионах России и не имеющих такой специфики.

«Приобретается» членство в российском обществе посредством удовлетворения ряду критериев, в частности — знание российской (и/или региональной) культуры, желание принадлежать к российскому обществу и проч. Можно, однако, совершить по-разному понимаемый подвиг и не сообразовываться с этими критериями. Люди с «приобретенным» членством, кроме того, могут перестать быть частью российского общества, что практически исключено в случае «органических» членов, если только они не совершат «предательство». Результаты помещаются в контекст исследований гражданства, и делается предположение, что описанные в статье конструкты являются источником института гражданства, а не наоборот, а также в контекст когнитивного поворота, происходящего в настоящий момент в исследованиях этничности.

Ключевые слова: этничность, нация, конструктивизм, воображение, российское общество

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Introduction

Although for a long time the study of ethnicity and the study of nationalism developed in parallel, hardly intersecting, the theory of ethnicity “after the cognitive turn” [Brubaker, Loveman, Stamatov 2004] clearly comes to the conclusion that, to the extent that ethnicity is a classificatory phenomenon, nationality is ethnic on a global level, or, more simply, nations are the same ethnic categories, but the classification within which they exist is global in nature and outlines all of humanity [Wimmer 2013].

In this regard, the significant tools accumulated in the study of ethnicity can be “returned” to “nations”, which until now have been studied mainly in a groupist manner. Even though the symbol of constructivism in ethnic studies is the work “Imagined Communities” by B. Anderson, dedicated to nations and nationalism (Anderson 2006), their focus is still rarely on the process and result of categorization (and therefore the rules according to which these categorizations are carried out), and their typical object is the collective

imaginaries of some fixed and rarely discussed set of people, "aware" of their "community" through various kinds of tools (the classic triad of census-map-museum). However, the idea that such imaginaries can only exist in connection with the same imaginaries of relatively "neighboring" nations and that all these images—along with the images in which these nations are juxtaposed, among which are the flags flying over the headquarters of the UN or the World Cup—is present much less frequently in the literature on nationalism.

The cognitive and classificatory turn in the study of ethnicity in relation to nations and nationalism allows, in addition, to change the perspective on such a phenomenon as membership in a nation. In the literature, it most often turns out to be identical to citizenship, but to the extent that ethnicity is a permanent classification of people and, accordingly, "scripts" and representations that make it possible to classify some people into one category and others into another, the nature of membership in national categories is also redescribed. In this perspective, it is not citizenship as such, but people's vernacular ideas about membership in national categories, the nature of this membership, as well as the rules for its "issuance" and "revocation".

This article, based on extensive field material, demonstrates the collective ideas of Russian residents about membership in the Russian nation or Russian society, while the main tool through which these ideas were revealed were questions about migrants and their opportunity to "become part of Russian society". This original approach made it possible to identify the ideas of ordinary people about the boundaries of Russian society, the rules of being in it, and, ultimately, about its nature, which were previously rarely discussed in Russian literature on this topic. This approach had not previously been used in such a refraction due to the fact that it is pointless to ask such questions directly, and only indirect questions like "Can a migrant with such and such characteristics become part of Russian society, and what do they need for this?" allow us to shed light on this issue.

In general, therefore, the redescription of the national as a classificatory phenomenon, which immediately raises the question of the rules of assignment to one category or another and, empirically, "pulls with it" the question of including migrants into society, is a theoretical and methodological innovation in the research of "Russian national identity". Below, a more detailed theoretical context will be presented, and, in particular, the current cognitive turn in ethnicity research will be described, redefining the object of research and bringing tribes, ethnic groups, races, and nations into a single frame. The methodology of the research carried out in five regions of Russia will be described using the methods of in-depth interviews (100) and focus group discussion (40), then the main results will be presented and people's ideas about Russian society will be described. It will then be shown how these results

fit into the framework of relevant international research, and it will be demonstrated that ideas about the Russian nation against an international background are quite flexible and inclusive.

Before this, however, it is necessary to make one theoretical and methodological explanation, explaining why in the article the concepts of "Russian society" and "Russian nation" are conceptually adjacent and synonymous. According to the approach used, which will be described in detail in the following sections, modern social science is gradually abandoning the conceptualization of social aggregates and taking the position of so-called methodological individualism. As a result, such concepts as "nation" and "society" cease to be used in scientific descriptions of reality and move from a conceptual object of research into the category of an element of the discursive reality being studied. In other words, previously, the social sciences studied nations and societies as really existing things; now they study them as elements of the description of reality by simple (and complex) people. According to the results of the pilot part of the study, for informants, the ideas of nation and society were largely adjacent, used interchangeably, and outlined a similar range of less abstract phenomena. At the same time, in comparison with the "Russian nation", the phrase "Russian society" was clearer to them and was more "woven" into their descriptions of reality. To the extent that it was necessary to make a decision on one phrase that was supposed to become a trigger for discussion, it was decided to use the phrase "Russian society". This, however, did not mean that it was "Russian society" that was being discussed; it meant that a semantic field was being discussed that described various ideas around the elements of a global classification by society, country, or nation, and this is precisely what the basic, conscious theoretical and methodological principle consists of, which is used in this work. In the same connection, the category "membership" is used. To the extent that informants and focus group participants spoke about "societies" in a manner that was understandable to them, to the same extent they, in a mode of interchangeability, talked about the opportunity to become a "member" or "part" of Russian society. This vernacular was included in the interview guide, a discussion was built around it, and then it was included in the title.

Theoretical framework and literature review

For a long time, studies of nationalism and ethnicity lay on different theoretical and disciplinary planes, and a non-theoretical association linked the former with the state and the latter with intrastate differences. In some ways, these phenomena began to overlap in connection with the work of Anthony Smith, who declared the "ethnic roots of nations", but this was not a theoretical

convergence in the full sense of the word [Smith 1986]. During this period, in addition, in both directions of research, the groupist approach was dominant, within the framework of which variously called communities—nations or ethnic groups—were declared as the object of research. The constructivist approach in sociology, associated primarily with the names of George Herbert Mead (1934), Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1995), firstly, directly goes back to classical European sociology of the early 20th century, and, secondly, being a derivative of the work of a whole host of post-war sociologists (the largest of whom can be considered Pierre Bourdieu (2018)), began to penetrate the study of ethnicity and nationalism since the 1960s. Within the framework of ethnicity studies, the key figure was the Norwegian anthropologist Fredrik Barth (1998), who published a collection of articles "Ethnic Groups and Borders" in 1969; then later, 1983 became sacramental for some, when three major works with constructivist positions were published devoted to nations and nationalism: "Nations and Nationalism" by Ernst Gellner (1991), "The Invention of Tradition" by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (2012), but above all, "Imagined Communities" by Benedict Anderson (2006). These studies focused on the mechanisms and ways of imagining ethnic communities in line with the Durkheimian tradition, the symbols around which this imagination was organized. Later, the concept of the imaginary came into sociological use, until now not adequately translated into Russian, but denoting objects of various kinds through which communities are imagined, the best illustration (and, most likely, the source) of which was Anderson's famous "triad": the census, map, and museum. Nations in this logic existed, however, in isolation from one another and were studied in this way. The works of Rogers Brubaker (2006), published in the early 2000s, as well as those of his followers [Wimmer, Glick Schiller 2002], forced us to problematize the object of research on ethnicity and nationalism. If nations and ethnic groups are figments of the imagination, are we not "slaves" of this imagination, and should the focus shift to other, more significant things? Which? The recipe was found in cognitive research, which converged on sociological constructivism on many important issues. The focus of research was placed on categories and the process of categorization itself [Brubaker, Loveman, Stamatov 2004], which, through the action of social machinery, reifies the products of categorization for human consciousness, and people begin to "believe" in nations and ethnic groups. Over the past 15 years, more and more prominent scientists from the field of social sciences have come to the conclusion that there is no separate ethnic, national, or racial reality, but there is a permanent categorization of other people into types, which is institutionalized differently in different places and contexts, and the results of this classification are available under different "labels": nations, ethnic groups, races, etc. [Wimmer 2013; Chandra 2012].

The general focus of research should be on both the process of categorization and its result. This is also what constitutes the "cognitive turn", partly proclaimed and partly diagnosed by Brubeker, which is now being conceptualized in Russian science [Varshaver 2023]. The cognitive turn in the study of ethnicity allows us to pay attention to phenomena that were previously in the shadows. One of these phenomena is the rules of membership in ethnic categories and, in particular, nations. Until then, these questions had been posed in what might be called citizenship studies [Isin & Turner 2002], and while focusing on the formal rules of membership, these studies had little to do with the perceptions of ordinary members of society about the nature and criteria of that membership. To the extent that ethnicity is a categorization that ordinary people are called upon to believe in and which ordinary people are called upon to learn to implement, since it is the presence of certain ideas in their consciousness that is an indicator of the existence of certain phenomena, it is these vernacular ideas that should become a priority object of analysis. And to the extent that ethnicity is a classificatory phenomenon, vernacular ideas about membership must be placed in focus, because it is they that guide the real, not the formal attribution of people to a nation or the refusal to qualify people as its members. Research that would follow this logic is rare in international science, but in the Russian field, which is rich in research, including ideas about the Russian nation [Tishkov 2008; Drobizheva 2020], carried out in a constructivist manner, studies of vernacular concepts of membership in a nation could not be found. This explains the novelty of the research conducted.

Research methodology

The key methodological move of the study was to, in order to study the ideas of "locals" about the nature and criteria of membership in the Russian nation, turn to their ideas about the integration of migrants into Russian society. The calculation was that conversations about the possibility of membership in the society of migrants would inevitably turn to the topic of membership in society in general, that these ideas would be, at least partially, "framed" in national terms, and thus it would be possible to reconstruct the diversity of ideas about the nation and membership in it. This approach contrasts with approaches mainly used to study vernacular concepts of the national, where the focus is on the various symbols that organize the idea of the nation among ordinary people.

The research was carried out in five regions of Russia. The methods used for data collection were interviews and focus group discussions. Work with the already collected data was carried out through axial coding and discourse analysis. A total of 100 interviews were collected, and 40 focus group discussions were conducted. The regions included in the study were the following: Moscow, Yaroslavl region, Sverdlovsk

region, Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), and Republic of Bashkortostan. The selection of regions was carried out on the basis of perceived differences in the idea of membership in the Russian nation between the multinational capital, regions in which the Russian population is numerically and symbolically dominant, and "national" regions. Within the region, a sample of settlements was carried out, within which, in the model case, the capital, a small town, and a rural settlement were taken.

Interview informants and focus group participants were recruited in different ways: via the Internet, with the help of recruiters, through the snowball method, as well as on the streets and in shopping centers. To select them, the quota method (gender, age, ethnic identification) was used, as well as the method of maximum diversity according to these and other criteria. The average number of focus group participants was 8 people, the average focus group duration was 93 minutes, and the average interview duration was 25 minutes.

The interview guide and focus group script were thematically the same. Among the key themes that were present both in the interviews and in the focus groups were, firstly, attitudes towards migrants; secondly, the possibility of including new members into Russian society; thirdly, attributes that facilitate, complicate, or make such inclusion impossible; and fourthly, the rules and "routes" of such inclusion. In addition, informants were offered vignettes—"portraits"—of people in relation to which they had to make judgments as to whether the person depicted in them was part of Russian society and why.

All interviews were recorded on audio media, all focus group discussions were recorded on video and audio media, and all recordings were transcribed. Transcripts were transferred to Atlas qualitative data analysis software, and a coding system was created within this software to identify thematic passages. The fragments were analyzed by the authors of the article, and the results of this analysis are presented below.

Before proceeding to a description of the results, however, it is necessary to make an important theoretical and methodological remark. The phrase "Russian nation" itself is a less common element of the current discourse of interviewees than the phrase "Russian society". In this case, however, when the "Russian nation" found itself in the language of the informants, this concept and the concept of "Russian society" turned out to be side by side and interchangeable approximately in the following vein: *"That is, what does it mean to join Russian society? To become a part, probably, of Russian society, the Russian nation" (m. 24, Dyurtyuli, RB).*

As a result, the interview guide and focus group discussion script were built around the phrase "Russian society". This turned out to be a good decision: the combination of "Russian society" and "migrants" in the formulation of the problem in most cases ethnicized the discussion and made it possible to directly address issues of membership in the Russian national category in a way convenient for the informants. The latter,

however, in the language of the informants could sound differently: "ethnic Russians", "Rossiyane", etc. This was expected, both for theoretical reasons, in which people communicate through symbols (In particular words), which mean different things to different people, but this is not a limitation for communication, and for empirical reasons: in the Russian context, there is no regulation of the terminological series associated with the designation of the Russian community or society.

Research results

The analysis showed that Russian society and membership in it are constructed by the study participants through two sets of criteria. The first set of criteria separates people who have "organic" membership in Russian society from all others, the second applies to all people who are not "organic" members of Russian society, who, satisfying them, can also become part of Russian society, but such membership will be of a different order than "organic" (called "acquired" in the study), and the extent to which they meet these criteria will continue to be "tested" throughout their lives. The second set of criteria is not used by default to evaluate membership in Russian society of its "organic" members; however, if some of these criteria are clearly violated, "organic" membership may be "revoked". The fact of classifying a person as an "organic" part of Russian society or a bearer of "acquired" membership influences attitudes and practices towards the person in question and is an implicit part of the construction of ethnicity in Russia. Moreover, both the first and second rows of criteria—to varying degrees and in different senses—turn out to be constitutive of the construct "Russian society". Let us present the informants' train of thought in the form of a diagram (see Fig. 1) and analyze its main components.

"Organic" membership

Membership in Russian society, which no one doubts, is given to people who simultaneously satisfy two criteria: "born in Russia" and "Russian". Russians born in Russia are a kind of core of Russian society, from the point of view of informants. There are few direct textual indications of this because the interviews and discussions were devoted to various marginal cases, but sometimes, "in reverse", the informants formulated the following thoughts: *"But the fact is a fact: they were born in Russia, in a Russian family, they speak Russian, they are Russians. And deny them [membership in Russian society—approx. aut.] just because they have some kind of sense of self—well, that would be wrong" (m, 25, M1).*

[1] Hereinafter, the following regional abbreviations are used: M — Moscow, RB — Republic of Bashkortostan, SO — Sverdlovsk Region, YaO — Yaroslavl Region, RSYa — Republic of Sakha (Yakutia).

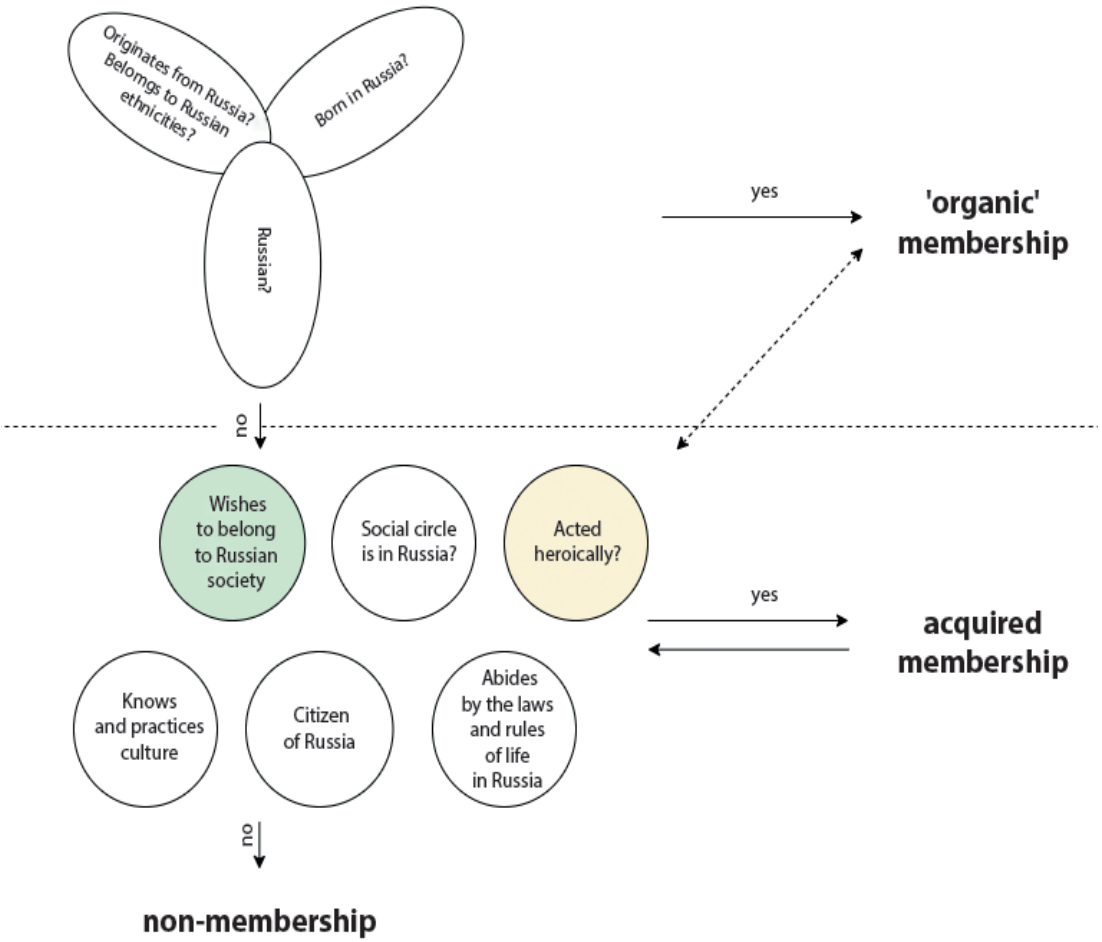

Figure 1. Membership criteria for Russian nation/society.

Separately, these criteria can also refer to "organic" membership; however, here such a clear consensus is no longer observed, and the hero of one of the vignettes—a Russian, born in Latvia and studying at the university in Russia—was clearly classified by some informants as part of Russian society. He clarified to others how much he planned to live in Russia after graduation, which is why his membership ceased to be natural and unambiguous: *"Since he came to study, but not in order to get a diploma and go back there. He most likely came to settle down, get a Russian education, and then live here. Most likely so. Then it is possible" (m, 35, Ufa, RB).*

The situation varied somewhat depending on the ethnicity of the speaker and the type of region where the interview or focus group was conducted. In "national" regions, and if the informant or focus group participant does not

belong to the "Russian" category, in the conjunction "Russian — born in Russia", as an indicator of "natural" membership, the criterion "Russian" is supplemented or replaced by the criterion "belongs to the peoples of Russia": *"We have such republics, even the Republic of Sakha-Yakutia, yes, you can have that too, here is the Republic of Dagestan, the Republic of Sakha-Yakutia, there is Circassia, yes, Chechnya, for example, Ingushetia. These are republics with a very bright national flavor. It has its own language and rules of behavior. And they are also part of Russian society, they are interesting, they speak both their own language and Russian" (f, 30, Aldan, RSYa).*

This "applies to the peoples of Russia" and, in general, a national narrative, however, is most likely an expression of a more general idea, according to which the "organic" part of Russian society are people whose ascendants were born in Russia. If a person's parents, grandparents, and beyond were born in Russia but the person themselves were not, they do not completely drop out of Russian society, and the "peoples of Russia" are a "proxy", an indicator that one of these relatives was born and lived in Russia.

> *Moderator:* Can Eduard be considered part of Russian society? <…>
>
> *Participant 1:* The parents are Russian. He lives, communicates, and plans to work officially.
>
> *Participant 2:* He has a desire, he has roots. If his parents are Russian, why not?
>
> *(f, 42, f, 38, Ishimbay, RB).*

Russians in this regard are those whose relatives in the ascending line were undoubtedly born and lived in Russia, and it is precisely this intuition that guides the widespread idea that the hero of the vignette, born in Latvia, is part of Russian society. In general, however, within the framework of the same logic, no one questions the membership in Russian society of the Yakuts, Bashkirs, and representatives of other "peoples of Russia" if they were born in Russia. It is likely, however, that a Yakut born in another country will be less likely to be classified as part of Russian society precisely due to the fact that the "Yakut-Russia" association is less stereotypical than the "Russian-Russia" association, but it is also likely that it will clarify to what extent he "comes" from Russia and, if so, classify him as part of Russian society. This, however, is a matter for further research.

It is also true that all those who do not correspond to the ideal type "Russian, born in Russia" in terms of the imagination of the Russian community as a whole will fall out of the core of the construct "Russian society", and even if the person was born in Russia and belongs to the "peoples of Russia", in "Russian" regions the popular consciousness will to a lesser extent relate it to Russian society than

in "national" ones[2]. And in this regard, membership criteria of a different order will be applied to such people, characteristic of those who were not "born" into Russian society but, as it were, "knocked" on it within the framework of certain life events. These criteria will be discussed in the second part of the results, but here it is important to summarize that "natural" membership in Russian society is assigned by public consciousness to people who were born in Russia, are Russians, or (to a lesser extent, typical for "national" regions) representatives of the "peoples of Russia". The cases that do not fit fully into these criteria are assessed partly on their own basis and partly on the basis of another set of criteria, which will be discussed below.

"Acquired" membership

"Organic" membership, as shown above, is not in its pure form membership by birth, because, from the point of view of informants, one can be "part of Russian society" without being born in Russia and, in turn, public consciousness does not "give ticket" to organic membership simply by birth, an example of which could be second-generation migrants, that is, children of those who were not born in Russia.

> [End of discussion of the vignette about Alibek] … Even if they become [part of Russian society], I think, only in the third generation. It seems so to me, well, my opinion.
>
> *(m, 63, Irbit, SO)*

However, in public perceptions, there is another type of membership in Russian society that has been designated as "acquired". This type of membership can be applied to those who are not an "organic" part of Russian society, but in relation to whom, for one reason or another, the question of membership in Russian society may arise. First of all, we are talking about differently defined migrants. Lacking the unconditional criteria for membership described above, such people are not generally included by informants in "Russian society", however, meeting several of the criteria listed below can make such a person a part of Russian society, from the point of view of informants. These criteria are also indicated in the diagram. We will provide an illustration for each from the narratives of informants and focus group participants.

[2] Here it is worth mentioning a topic that is marginal for the article but important for the subject, in which, although the majority of informants and focus group participants accepted the construct of "Russian society", which was offered to them by researchers, in the "national" regions, as well as informants and focus group participants, groups that did not classify themselves as "Russians" sometimes problematized this construct, saying that Russian society as such does not exist but that there are regional societies that differ from each other and have their own rules of membership and entry.

Knows and practices culture: *"One of the signs of belonging to a society is culture and part of language. If he does not know the language, he cannot be ours" (m, 65, Yaroslavl, YaO).*

Is a citizen of Russia: *"If he receives a passport or document, he will be part of the Russian Federation. And if not, then no" (m, 60, 1st Khomustakhsky Nasleg, RSYa).*

There is a social circle in Russia:

> *Moderator:* According to your version, has he integrated into Russian society?
>
> *Participant 1:* Yes, yes.
>
> *Moderator:* And due to what?
>
> *Participant 1:* Due to the fact that he leads an active life with Russians, without being closed off with other expats. That is, he communicates with Russians, he leads the same lifestyle that we lead…
>
> *(f, 39, M).*

He complies with Russian laws and the rules of life in Russia: *"Of course, if he came to live with us like that, he must comply with us, with our rules, laws <...> But the main thing, the most important thing, daughter, I do not like disorder, they were dishonest. And so that the law is observed, why not? Let them live" (f, 75, Yakutsk, RSYa).*

Wants to live in Russia or be part of its society: *"You understand, the integration of an individual into a new society is possible if he is interested in it. He is interested in this when he finds himself in someone else's society and wants to take root in it" (m, 36, Yekaterinburg, SO)".*

Each of these factors "works" within the framework of the following logic: yes, initially a person is not part of Russian society, but if he: lives in Russia and knows the language, complies with community rules and laws, his social circle is in Russia, and he explicitly wants to live in Russia, he can become or actually is part of Russian society. It is also important to note that none of these conditions have innate, unchangeable characteristics. Specifically to find out whether a person who is considered a non-white race can be a full member of Russian society, a vignette was introduced into the study, the main character of which was a black resident of the region in which the research was conducted (Moscow in Moscow, Yakutia in Yakutsk, etc.) and who was born in Russia, knows the Russian language on an equal basis with the locals, and according to other criteria does not differ from them. For the vast majority, the hero of the vignette was an undeniable part of Russian society. If he had not been born in Russia and his closest relatives in the ascending line had also been born in another country, he would still have been able to become a part of Russian society, having satisfied the described set of conditions. In this sense, Russian society is to some extent inclusive because it does not pose insurmountable

barriers to entry; in some ways, it is exclusive because there are many barriers, and not all of them can be overcome only through desire.

It is important, however, that in the minds of residents, there is a "fast track" path to membership that does not necessarily require meeting other conditions. This path can be described as a "feat". If a non-member of Russian society performs some outstanding action "for the good" and "in the name" of society, other membership criteria for basic non-members of Russian society who wish to become such will not apply to him. Cases were reproduced when such an action was participation in hostilities in Ukraine: *"That is, I think that it is probably quite difficult for a black person to sincerely become a part of Russian culture. But at the same time, of course, in some circumstances, in some individual cases, he can do this. Because, again, the main thing is greatness of spirit and understanding of what life is and how one can live. <...> Even I know that a black man fought with Prigozhin and died heroically. Therefore... why is he not Russian? <...> Of course. That is, I think that a Russian person has, first of all, a willingness to help in any situation" (m, 19, M).*

Termination of membership

It is also important that, in contrast to "organic" members of society, "acquired" membership, according to the analyzed ideas, can be lost if a person no longer meets certain criteria. For example, if a person with an acquired membership leaves the country, after some time they cease to be a part of Russian society.

> *Interviewer:* I see. But for us, he must build something. That is, he is part of Russian society, right? While he's working here.
>
> *Informant:* Yes… For as long as he works, he is a part of it.
>
> *(m, 52, Yaroslavl, YaO).*

The same applies to breaking the law; it is unlikely that specific people who talk about the need to deport migrants who have violated the law are the same people who believe that migrants working in Russia are part of Russian society, but deportation as a sanction for those who break the law is an element of the general logic of differentiation between "organic" and "acquired" membership, part of which is the exclusion from society of people who acquired membership and then committed a crime.

> *Participant 1:* If you did something wrong, please, go back home.
>
> *Participant 2:* There is no need to leave them here; there is no need. Why do we need to feed them? Why do we need to spend money from the budget?
>
> *(f, 44, f, 27, Irbitsky district, SO).*

"Organic" membership cannot be lost through leaving the country or violating the law; even criminals sentenced to long terms remain part of Russian society. The only way, from the point of view of the informants, one can stop being a part of Russian society if a person was born into it is either to explicitly stop wanting to be a part of it or to commit an action that is identical in modality to a feat but the opposite in sign—betrayal. It is not surprising that the examples cited and discussed by informants included famous people who declared their disagreement with Russian policies and left the country. To the extent that this was viewed by informants as a betrayal, in some cases it was also viewed as a termination of membership in Russian society.

> Participant 1: No, he will not be part of my society. If he leaves his country in difficult times, he will remain nothing to me.
>
> Participant 3: And then they will come, and you will tell them later… Are you not a member of my society?
>
> Participant 1: No, I will not let him in. No.
>
> *(f, 44, f, 46, Dyurtyuli, RB)*

However, sometimes, even in such a case, such people remained part of Russian society in the minds of informants.

> Moderator: Everyone knows about it, so it is a very easy example. Is Alla Pugacheva part of Russian society for you or not?
>
> Participant 1: I do not know. Yes, she lived and worked here. She is, of course, Russian. For me.
>
> Participant 2: I think she is part of it. Certainly. Yes.
>
> *(f, 50, f, 66, 1st Khomustakh nasleg, RSYa).*

Do "organic" members of Russian society meet the criteria for "acquired" membership?

Thus, membership in Russian society can be "organic" and "acquired" and, if "acquired" membership can also be denied, one can lose "organic" membership only in extraordinary cases. But can we say that all people who have an "organic" membership also satisfy the conditions of an "acquired" one? Here lies the paradox. Some criteria really seem to be satisfied by birth (for example, knowledge of culture), and some (In particular, compliance with the laws and rules of the community) are obviously not observed by all members, but this is not important for membership, as it is imagined by informants—criminals and hooligans are part of Russian society, just not very "respectable". And this is another indication that "organic" membership is indeed of a different nature

than "acquired" membership. However, these criteria, in relation to "organic" members of Russian society, partly have the character of informal normativity, and partly turn out to be the subject of close attention if a "betrayal" is committed or a set of first-line criteria raises doubts. In particular, membership in Russian society may be called into question if a person simultaneously qualifies as a non-Russian, their primary social circle is abroad, and they hold the citizenship of another country.

The institution of citizenship as a derivative of ideas about membership in society

The last step is to discuss "citizenship" and the position of this criterion among other criteria for membership in Russian society. It would seem that here it is, albeit a formalized but understandable criterion, to which all other criteria could theoretically be reduced. But informants indicate "citizenship" as only one of the criteria, but this criterion is far from the only one, and in most cases, it is neither decisive nor even significant. Here are some rare examples of how it is put at the forefront: *"Well, basically, if you want to be, you want to be a part, and you, of course, will want citizenship. I think first citizenship, then part. I think so, and even then, it should already be..." (m, 63, Irbit, SO).*

However, in most cases, if it is mentioned, it is mentioned in this way: *"You can be a citizen of a country by passport, but in spirit you can be anyone. That is, maybe I am French at heart, how do I know" (m, 45, Pereslavl-Zalessky, YaO).*

However, the results presented above seem to describe the conceptual basis of the institution of citizenship—in Russia and in other countries. Citizenship in most countries is acquired either by birth among citizens of the country (In some cases, on the territory of the country) or through "naturalization"; "naturalization" is a difficult process, during which you need to go through a number of "tests". Moreover, it is easier to lose acquired citizenship. And here, moving on to the discussion, we can assume that it is the collective ideas about membership in society that are expressed in the institution of citizenship and not the institution of citizenship that turns out to be the source of ideas about membership in society. And it is precisely these ideas—to the extent that ethnicity at the global level is a classification by nation and also to the extent that they are rarely studied in such a logic—that require primary attention. How and through what theoretical and methodological tools this can be done will be described in the "Discussion" section.

Conclusion

Analysis of interviews and focus groups made it possible to show that there are stable, reproducing ideas about membership in Russian society. It can be assumed that these ideas are fragments of a broader classificatory picture,

which can be described as follows: All of humanity is divided into nations; there are also societies, consisting primarily of people "born" into these societies but also of people who transferred from one society to another. People gain "access" to this picture through imaginaries associated with global diversity (world map, World Cup, etc.), which are not discussed in this article, as well as through intuitions associated with "Russian society", "Russian nation", and other similar constructs in relation to which there are ideas about membership and to which this article is devoted. To summarize and extend this idea in the language of ethnicity studies, "after the cognitive turn", nations are vernacular tools for imagining ethnic difference at the global level; nations are placed next to each other and form a classification. There are strong ideas about membership in nations, and these ideas, in relation to the construct of "Russian society", have been studied. However, the extent to which ideas about Russian society are truly an organic component of this global picture (and whether the "landscape" of imagination is structured differently, less linearly, and simply) is an empirical question and a topic for a broader study of tools for imagining diversity at the global level.

It is also important to situate this study and perspective within the literature on citizenship. Citizenship studies, focusing on the formation of the corresponding institution [Magnette 2005] and trying to "unravel" its logic, also have a "vernacular" component, which concerns the relationship between national constructs and the formal category of citizenship [Clarke 2014]. The findings of these studies are generally consistent with the peripheral findings of this study; according to them, citizenship does correlate with ordinary people's ideas about the community that is delineated by this institution. A parallel stream of primarily historical research concerns how the institution of citizenship supports the global order that has been intensely nationalized over the past 100 years [Glenn 2000]. Research in which this order would be studied as a permanent categorization of people, territories, and other phenomena according to nationality, and in fact, ethnicity and citizenship would be studied as a tool for implementing this classification—as far as we know—has not been carried out to date. At the same time, citizenship is an important tool for imagining difference at the global level and maintaining global order. And to the extent that the key to the existence of a global order is ways to maintain it at the local level, vernacular ideas about membership in national communities or societies are an important topic for research.

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