

## **People Without a Territory (Human without a space)**

Immigrant workers in Russia live in a world all their own, by which I mean in veritable "enclaves of the non-existent." Their civil rights are regulated by laws, yet these juridical definitions are merely of a declarative nature and offer no de facto protection to the people in question.

Russian society has made no attempt to elucidate the ideological role and economic necessity of employment immigration, nor does it seem willing to acknowledge the latter as an essential component of state employment policy.

On an everyday level, the mere sight of immigrant workers often elicits reactions bordering on nationalistic intolerance, and this holds true among virtually all classes of Russian society. But the problem goes beyond societal rejection, for immigrant workers are also confronted with outright mockery of their ethnicity and religious beliefs, as well as disdain for their very way of life and thinking. As a result, clashes between locals and ethnic immigrant groups are frequent occurrences, as are fatal occupational accidents due to the disregard (by Russian employers) of safety regulations or worker protection laws. Not surprisingly, key immigrant issues like social security, health care and child education are also typically ignored.

Even if these people are non-existent and inconvenient in the eyes of Russian society, they are vital to the economy and profits. Nevertheless, immigrant workers are feared, hated and avoided, and far greater effort is made to get rid of them than to help their circumstances.

Still, like unwanted birds of passage, immigrant workers continue to flock to the Russian capital and other large cities in hopes of finding an employer who can fulfill their dream of a steady income, success and happiness - for them, yes, but also for the families they must often leave behind.

This leads to an important question: Does the unique world inhabited by Russia's immigrant workers include a private "territory," or space, for the individual? And, if so, what does this territory look like? Here, I am referring to the private space that all human beings normally call their own - a space that includes memories, family, a home, etc. In the case of Russia's immigrant workers, perhaps it can only be found in the depths of consciousness or covered by a veil of invisibility, or behind closed eyes?

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