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List of Abbreviations

- AMS Arbeitsmarktservice
- BMBWF Das Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung
- CAE Certificate in Advanced English
- EPD Ergänzungsprüfung aus Deutsch
- EUROSTAT The statistical office of the European Union
- IELTS International English Language Testing System
- ÖSD Das Österreichische Sprachdiplom Deutsch
- OECD The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
- MA 35 Immigration Office
- UNESCO The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Abstract (English)

The following research is an ethnographic work where I engage with educational migration as exemplified by the students from the Russian Federation who come to Vienna for obtaining a university degree. I approach it from an anthropological perspective by employing long-term (2016-2019) participant observation as a core research method.

By developing my arguments, I will seek to identify in which way their migration process has been moulded by the development discourse of a “better life”, as it is understood and imagined on part of the Russian middle-class households. In doing so, an attempt is put forth to answer the following *research questions*. How is the decision taken to relocate to Vienna? What in particular do the Russian students imply under a “better life” in the European/Austrian context? In which way does family influence a student’s migration process? How does an imaginary of a “better life” juxtapose to a student’s lifecycle? And to what extent does it affect one’s migration strategies?

As argued, alongside with a commonly practiced domestic migration, with Moscow and Saint-Petersburg as major centers of gravity, since the 2000s, Russia has experienced an emerging trend of a transnational “culture of migration” (Massey et al. 1993; Kandel and Massey 2002), with developed Western countries as frequently-selected host destinations. Although travelling abroad has become less exclusive and more accessible for the “mere mortals”, a Russian passport still provides little space for international mobility. Under these circumstances, it is a student visa that has become best of a bad bunch enabling Russian middle-class to experience an alternative life in a “better” place.

Abstract (German)

In der vorliegenden Arbeit wird die internationale Bildungszuwanderung am Beispiel von ausländischen Studierenden aus der Russischen Föderation, die zum Zwecke des Studiums nach Wien kommen, behandelt. Der methodischen Vorgehensweise der anthropologischen Forschung entsprechend, wurde diese Arbeit hauptsächlich anhand von teilnehmender Beobachtung im "Feld" (2016-2019) durchgeführt.

Basierend auf den erhobenen empirischen Daten, wird die Wirkung des Entwicklungsdiskurses des imaginären "besseren" Lebens auf den Migrationsprozeß von russischen Studierenden untersucht. Vor diesem Hintergrund treten die folgenden Recherchefragen hervor. Worin besteht der Entscheidungsablauf in Bezug auf Wien als Studienreiseziel? Welchen kultur-spezifischen Kennzeichen des "besseren" Lebens werden im europäischen/österreichischen Kontext seitens der Studierenden akzentuiert? In welchem Umfang wird deren Migrationsprozeß seitens der Familie beeinflusst? Gäbe es eine Korrelation zwischen den Darstellungen des "besseren" Lebens und Lebenszyklus eines Studierenden/einer Studierenden? Falls ja, auf welche Weise werden dadurch die Migrationsstrategien von Studierenden hineingewirkt?

Seit 2000 tritt neben der inländischen Migration, mit Moskau und Sankt Petersburg als die zwei wichtigsten Migrationsziele, auch das post-Sowjetische Russland als Beispiel der neu entstehenden transnationalen "culture of migration" (Massey et al. 1993; Kandel and Massey 2002) auf. Obwohl Auslandsreisen weniger exklusiv und elitär wurden, bietet ein russischer Inlandspaß nur ein eingeschränktes Spektrum der internationalen Mobilitätsmöglichkeiten an. Unter diesen Umständen ein Aufenthaltstitel für Studierende dient als eine leistbare Option, die der russischen Mittelschicht ein alternatives Leben im "besseren" Ort ermöglicht.

Subject and research interest

“What I like in Europe most of all - people are enjoying life here. And *how* my parents live: endless work all over the year, dacha in summer, rare vacations at the seaside, and that’s all. They are hardly 50, but they feel old. I imagine my life resembling that I see in Vienna”, explains Tamara, 24¹, a Master student of the Vienna University of Economics and Business. For her, studying in Vienna is a mosaic consisting of vibrant life experiences in the present and a sort of a guarantee of a happy and prosperous life in the future. Dmitriy, aged 36, a Bachelor student of the University of Vienna, renders his Austrian lifestyle far more brightful and fulfilling compared to that left in Russia, although both relocation and the life following migration had cost a family a fortune and scaled back his career as a simultaneous interpreter in Moscow. A 33-year-old Darya abandoned her native Yekaterinburg - described in vernacular as the Russia’s capital of the Urals, - as well as a well-paid position of an IT-specialist bringing along her husband and two little kids for a student visa in Austria. While reflecting on her motivation, she mostly talks of cresting a personal watershed and longing for challenges as main driving forces. Tamara, Dmitriy and Darya are among 2 144 (2017)² international students from the Russian Federation who reside in Vienna for educational purposes. Some of them come to Austria alone, dragging solely a lightweight suitcase behind, the others - equipped with a spouse, children and oceans of stuff. Some accommodate in student hostels, which are located near the chosen university and mustn’t calculate the costs of water, electricity and heating monthly spent, the others - rent the houses at the outskirts of Vienna, as they failed to find an appropriate variant in the city, and pay a

¹As anonimity and confidentiality of participants are crucial to ethical research practice, I used pseudonyms. Thus, after each interview quotation, there is a pseudonym for the interviewee and his/her correct age at the time of the interview.

²https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/fileadmin/user_upload/Publikationen/Universitaet%20Wiensbericht_2017_barrierefrei.pdf

myriad of costs involved. International students from Russia do indeed differentiate on age, marital status, education, work experience - their motivations and migration processes are diverse as well. However, what they do share in common, is the privilege of an experiencing way of mobility within the framework of a global migration stream, a counterflow to the “familiar” migration processes, which are easier for national states, researches and policy-makers to rationalize and understand as economic collapses, military actions causing poverty and fear for one’s life remain among the most common pushing factors which make people move - the popularity of the words “refugees”, “economic- and political migrants” could testify to this (Baas 2010).

The present thesis approaches educational migration from an anthropological perspective as exemplified by the Russian³ student migrants in Vienna. In so doing, I seek to examine their decision-making process, as well as transnational life experience following migration. As an anthropologist Paul Rabinow (1997) claims, entrance into the foreign environment urges an outsider to treat unfamiliar through the prism of accustomed familiar life practices, whereby the latter, influenced externally, are gradually losing firm self-evidence and become an object of reflection. During my interviews with student migrants, I was astounded how profoundly my informants were rethinking their lives, life projects, relations with self, family, homeland and a host destination - studying in Vienna has turned into much more than just a university routine, following the trajectory German courses - university - employment, a tempting perspective to get a European diploma, or boosting their CVs. Students’ stories, which I have gathered during my fieldwork and a long-term residence in Vienna, tend to intersect in a number of ways. The first refers to the connotation of the term “abroad”. For different users - depending on the cultural context - places possess different meanings (see, e.g. Rodman 1992): in the case of Russian students, “going abroad” relates to the particular geographies forming so-termed “developed countries”, or, more specifically, Western European states, the USA, Canada, and Australia. In their explanations given for migration, students were not talking precisely of Austria, or local universities as a target of their aspirations, rather - that of West, Europe,

³ The term “Russian” in this thesis implies the citizens of the Russian Federation, and doesn’t focus on an individual ethnic affiliation.

Western/European way of life and high quality standards implying ipso facto higher education as well. Here, the decision to set out “abroad” by oneself, or to send offspring for studying “abroad” is tightly intertwined with a development thought frequently shared by “mobile” Russian middle-class households: life conditions and education in Europe prone to be perceived as superior to that in transient, isolated⁴, politically and economically unstable “Putin Russia”. The idea of going to a “better place”, with a high potential for barrier-free transnational mobility, a priori fuels expectations from an upcoming life experience “abroad” in terms of riveting and illuminating enterprise. Moreover, the dominance of a development discourse propped up by the status of Russia as a third country state in the European context nurtures the emergence of various behavioural profiles entailing that in gender and marital relations. The shared similarities enveiled with the idea of a “better life” driving student international migration from Russia to Austria has provided the basis for the central research question which I strive to answer in this thesis, that is, **in which way does a development discourse of a “better life” in the context of post-Soviet Russia shape and affect student transnational migration to Austria/Europe**. The complexity of the research question requires its subdivision into at least four sections:

- ❑ Who are these migrants? What is their social affiliation in the homeland?
- ❑ What particularly do they imply under the “better life” in the European/Austrian context?
- ❑ In which way does a family influence a student’s migration process?
- ❑ How does an imaginary of “better life” juxtapose to a student’s lifecycle and to what extent does it affect one’s migration strategies?

By developing my arguments, I will advert to the data collected in the course of a long-term residence (over 3 years, from 2016 ongoing) and fieldwork which took place from October 2018 till January 2019 in Vienna. My core methods of data collection are that of participant observation whereby I have applied, as the context may require, both strategies - observe and participate, as well as informal and unstructured individual

⁴A Russian passport is commonly regarded as a mobility-limiting factor, which prescribes time and-costconsuming visa procedures.

interviews⁵ with student migrants who have resided in Vienna for a year and beyond⁶. Furthermore, as I myself came to Vienna three years ago through a German preparatory course and also hold a student visa, I will provide some insights into my own experience - with reference to Karen O'Reilly (2012), first-hand experience, being there and experiencing life that is lived, is the best way to learn about people's lives.

The present thesis has a fourfold structure. The first chapter unfolds theoretical and empirical contours of the research. For starters, I explore the research framework within a broad context; afterwards, in the section 1.1., Austria-referred migration regulations and student visa requirements will be provided and discussed. Later on, in the section 1.2., academic literature on transnational students is reviewed. In the final sections, I will tackle the chosen methodology and reflect on my position as a researcher in the field.

The second part engages with interdisciplinary approaches to migration with an emphasis on transnationalism and lifestyle migration theory. Besides, I provide some insights into the specifics of structural composition of a contemporary Russian society, by referring foremost to its middle class.

The third part is empirical. In the beginning, I introduce my research participants. In doing so, in the section 3.1., I will look closely at a *pre-migration period* comprising admission procedures and preparation of visa-related documents. Furthermore, the role of family in the decision-making process will be examined.

The section 3.2. will seek to explore the way Europe tends to be imagined on part of the Russian students and their families within the "better life" framework.

Afterwards, in the sections 3.3. and 3.4., I shift the focus on the life *in migration*, by describing a students' daily routine including work and money issues, study both at the

⁵ By January 2019, I have conducted fifteen unstructured individual interviews, which have been properly protocolled and later analyzed; as far as informal interviews are concerned, due to spontaneity and situatedness of the context they were occurring in, I could hardly quantify them focusing on memorizing the relevant piece of information instead.

⁶ Based on both observations and a personal experience, I would say that over the first year after relocation a student seeks to look around, set the contacts, understand where one actually is and what one is expected to do. To a great degree, this newly-fledged student status is affected by a "tourist gaze" (Urry 2002), what tends to fade away in the course of time. After the first year is gone, a student either extends a visa, or leaves the country.

preparatory courses and at the university. In the section 3.5., students' assessment of their position as third country nationals and student visa holders in the Austrian context will be discussed. Finally, the section 3.6. seeks to elucidate the interconnection between a development discourse of a "better life" and gender/marital relations.

The finalizing chapter makes sense of the results and draws conclusions.

In the present thesis, I tend to identify the migration process of the third country students from Russia to Vienna as a form of so-called lifestyle migration. It was 2009, when two female anthropologists Karen O'Reilly and Michaela Benson in their book "Lifestyle migration: escaping to the good life?" firstly employed the umbrella term "lifestyle migration" as a conceptual framework for examining various forms of privileged migration. Having offered its "dynamic definition", that is, "lifestyle migration is the spatial mobility of relatively affluent individuals of all ages, moving either part-time or full-time to places that are meaningful because, for various reasons, they offer the potential of a better quality of life" (Ibid, p. 2), O'Reilly and Benson have yet left the room for the amendments in the light of new empirical data. While in its "classic" variant, the concept has focused on such stories as those of young Westerners in India rejecting life in "big, bad West" (Korpela 2009), residential migrants from Northern and Western Europe at coastal Spain (Oliver 2007), "Anglo" women moving to romanticized Florence (Trundle 2014), Western parents seeking to protect children from "insecurity of Western lifestyle" (Matthews et al. 2000) etc., education as a facilitator of lifestyle migration hasn't been approached in relevant literature. Furthermore, lifestyle migration from non-EU countries to one of the EU states gets power relations involved in terms of migration regulations and legal hurdles - it is a novelty as well, as the concept generally implies other-way-round migration, that is, from Western affluent societies towards "simple, but meaningful" life in the non-Western ones. Thus, it makes a point about class structures by demonstrating the saltation of the Russian middle-class from becoming a labour low-waged migrant class in Austria soon after arrival towards obtaining well-paid employment for the highly-qualified, which had been occupied before migration.

Last but not least, the researched context of mine, i.e., educational migration from post-Soviet Russia to Austria, as far as I am aware, is scantily documented being

reduced to sociological quantitative research papers produced by Austrian Integration Fond (see, e.g. Zaussinger et al. 2016) and Ministry of Education, and hasn't been qualitatively explored before. In Russia herself, despite an evident growth of transnational educational pilgrimages especially among urban-based youngsters and "creative" intelligentsia, their migration process remains understudied and neglected. "Going abroad" is commonly embroiled in an overarching discourse of brain drain and "the fifth migration wave", aka "Putinskiy iskhod", of the open-minded, liberal in thoughts, and imbued with the idea of irretrievableness - once left "abroad", there would be no intention of coming back (unless one fails). In this regard, Leonid Bershidskiy, a former editor-in-chief of Vedomosti, a business daily published in Moscow, who himself left Russia for Germany, commented, "the new emmigration wave - the fifth - is neither a forced and political one like the previous three, nor caused by economic hardships, experienced in the 1990s. How to call this phenomenon? Perhaps, the emmigration of disappointment".⁷

The present thesis sets the object, firstly, to enrich both the share and contexts of qualitative anthropological researches in the burgeoning fields of international student migration, as well as lifestyle migration studies; secondly, as the research engages with a particular migration phenomenon from post-Soviet Russian society, the acquired data might serve as a contribution to post-socialistic research area.

⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/bershidsky/posts/754607527895511>. An original version in Russian: «Новая волна эмиграции — пятая, выходит — не вынужденная и не политическая, как первые три, и не экономическая, как четвертая (та, что прокатилась в 1990-е). Как назвать эту волну? Пожалуй, эмиграцией разочарования».

Chapter 1. Theoretical and empirical frames of the research

The contemporary world is facing a formidable international move under the banner of university education (Hansen and Stig Thøgersen 2015). Admittedly, study abroad serves as a mediator towards the global academy and accumulated cultural capital⁸ (Bourdieu 1977) supposing to provide a person involved with a precious baggage of knowledge, an advantageous CV and, consequently, attractive job prospects. According to UNESCO estimates (2018)⁹, in 2016 approximately 5 million individuals were enrolled in educational programmes outside the country of origin what 3 million more compared to the year 2000. The rapid growth of international students scattered all over the world, as well as the variety of forms and contexts their experience of mobility has acquired couldn't have been remained unaddressed - in 2015, due to a joint brainstorming, OECD, UNESCO and EUROSTAT introduced the term "internationally mobile students" implying holders of a so-called non-resident student visa status, or a student visa. This definition primarily refers to "individuals who have physically crossed an international border between two countries with the objective to participate in educational activities in a destination country"¹⁰, and focuses on those students who are obtaining a tertiary education level or higher, with a prolonged length of stay (more than one year and up to 7 years).¹¹ Internationally mobile students are commonly distinguished from so-termed "credit-mobile students" participating in various exchange programmes like intra-European Erasmus while continuing enrolled in the university at home (Van Mol 2015) and "foreign students" implying non-citizens who have migrated with their parents and tend to have a permanent residence¹² in the country of studying. Thereafter, a student visa that must be extended on a yearly basis

⁸ In his work "Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction" (1977), a French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu conceptualized cultural capital as a set of social assets including education, style of dress and speech that promote a social mobility.

⁹ <http://data.uis.unesco.org/>

¹⁰ <http://glossary.uis.unesco.org/glossary/en/home>

¹¹ <https://migrationdataportal.org/themes/international-students>

¹² In the Austrian case - "Daueraufenthalt – EU" that authorises non-EU citizens legally reside and work in Austria/Europe for an unlimited period of time.

in the host country is the most important differentiating criterium of a student migrant in the sea of overlapping definitions.

The choice of migration destinations heavily depends on a country's prestige on international arena, adequate regulations regarding international migrants, language accessibility (preferably English), tuition fees and accommodation costs, provided scholarships and other forms of financial support - in other words, on a general student-friendly and open environment. As a Chinese anthropologist Xin Liu (2000) claims, "study abroad" could be better grasped through the prism of a "moral geography" reflecting the global educational hierarchy: states are symbolically ordered in diverse ways based on different qualities they possess. In this regard, "study abroad" stands in for particular geographies embracing "developed countries", or, precisely, the USA, Australia, Canada, Western European countries, New Zealand, South Korea, Japan, and Singapore. As UNESCO, Project Atlas, OECD demonstrate, the top prominent host countries are the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia¹³. By the present moment, China keeps its leadership as a global source of international student migrants followed by India and South Korea in the list of top sending countries¹⁴.

European nation-states and related institutions of higher education are, as a rule, targeted either on locals and intra-European Erasmus students who are authorised to move freely within the territory of the Member States and prone to take selective courses in English, or elaborate the extensive network of fee-based preparatory language and subject courses, which are de-facto designed for non-EU migrants. Austria is not an exception - indeed, native universities magnetize alongside with homegrown *Maturanten* primarily German-speaking EU citizens from neighbouring Germany and South Tirol (de-jure Italy)¹⁵. However, state's policies granting a permission for foreign minors and youngsters to proceed with the studies as soon as a school leaving

¹³ <https://migrationdataportal.org/themes/international-students>

¹⁴ Since the late 1970s, People's Republic of China has enthusiastically promoted studying abroad (predominately in the USA) amid the youngsters either for their further return as newly-fledged academic talents or for serving the interests of the state (Liu 2014).

¹⁵ <https://www.wien.gv.at/statistik/pdf/forschung-entwicklung-2018.pdf>

certificate is obtained, a fast-track matriculation procedure, an absence/a reduction of tuition fees for selected countries, as well as a university-attached system of complemented courses have gradually become powerful mechanisms promoting a transnational non-EU educational migration to the country. As a consequence, since the early 2000s, it is education alongside with labour migration and family reunification that has gradually become a major driving force underlying an international influx to Austria¹⁶, and turning Vienna hosting 194 145 students (WS 2017/18) into the largest “university city” in the German-speaking area¹⁷. Such a turn towards education is a novelty for Austria - previous migration waves were represented predominately by the guest-workers, Gastarbeiter, from Turkey and Yugoslavia in the 1960s -1970s, followed by the refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, the Chechen republic (de jure Russian Federation), Afghanistan in the 1990s (Bauer 2008).¹⁸Quoting Heinz Fassmann, a former Austrian minister of education (Dec 2018 - Jun 2019), “nowadays migration to Austria significantly differs from that we used to have before; alongside with labour migrants, as well as immigrants seeking to obtain a family reunification visum, students have got actively involved in migration flows to Austria, what, however, has not been fully acknowledged yet.”¹⁹

¹⁶Zuwanderung nach Österreich: ein Gewinn? ÖIF Forschungsbericht. online https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:AYLhURDO6ooJ:https://www.integration.sfonds.at/fileadmin/content/AT/Downloads/Publikationen/Forschungsbericht_Zuwanderung_nach_OEsterreich_Ein_Gewinn.pdf+&cd=1&hl=ru&ct=clnk&gl=at

¹⁷ <https://www.wien.gv.at/statistik/pdf/forschung-entwicklung-2018.pdf>

¹⁸ <https://www.wien.gv.at/statistik/pdf/forschung-entwicklung-2018.pdf>

¹⁹An original version in German: “wir haben heute in Österreich eine ganz andere Zuwanderungssituation als in der Vergangenheit,(...) neben der Arbeitsmigration,durch Familienzuwanderung aber auch durch Studierende charakterisiert, die einen wichtigen Anteil der Zuwanderer ausmachen. Diese differenzierte Zuwanderungssituation wurde jedoch noch nicht zur Gänze erkannt”.

Table 1. The percentage of new-comers, Erstzugelassene, both regular and unregular, depending on their citizenship, from 2013/14 till 2016/17

Group of States	% 2013/2014	% 2014/15	% 2015/16	% 2016/17
Austria	55,9	55,8	52,6	54,3
Germany	11,8	11,7	11,4	12,4
EU	15,9	15,5	15,1	16,2
Third countries	16,4	17	20,9	17,2
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: BMWWF, unidata.

1.1. Better be lucky with a citizenship: Austria as a host

A context in which migration occurs is of a great significance²⁰. In this regard, I won't reinvent the wheel as it has been engraved in the migration studies before - migration processes are heavily affected by the societies they take place in. The researched ethnographic case comes from Austria: here, existing migration regulations could be better grasped through the prism of a welfare state model (Esping-Andersen, Gösta 1990) which is characterized by high income taxes, extensive redistribution of economic means, as well as by a high level of state regulation and social intervention in the lives of its citizens (Pedersen 2017). Social scientists (see, e.g., Weiner 1995; Geiger

²⁰ A so-called "refugee crises" of 2015 whereby the number of asylum applications only in Austria had tripled to 90 000 from less than 30 000 the previous year has triggered the pathologisation and orientalisation of migration within the framework of a Western nation welfare state. Since 2016, migration regulations regarding student visa as well have changed drastically - e.g., the cost for preparatory courses increased almost thrice, from 450 to 1300 euros per term.

and Pecoud 2013) state that since the 1990s, the developed world, and Europe in particular, has “disciplined” increasing human mobility, through erecting “walls around the west” (Andreas and Snyder 2000). That implies elaboration of certain exclusion/inclusion criteria - in other words, who is entitled for a permanent (temporary) residence, who has got an access to the labour market and, what has become a “hot button” in the Austrian context, social protection benefits. The welfare nation state model wrapped into the European macro-membrane puts a great imprint on international student migration to Austria as well, whereby an overarching term “international” could hardly lay claim to cover the variety of contexts students are coming from in terms of migration regulations, language and cultural differences, study requirements etc. - indeed, non-Austrian students are differentiated upon academic and life experience from their home-based university peers. In order not to underestimate the power of a European welfare nation state, let us imagine in a simplistic form a nesting doll, a maximum ad minima, in which the largest one is Austria, the host. As per the research report titled “Die Studierenden-Sozialerhebung. Bericht zur sozialen Lage der Studierenden”²¹, which was carried out by Austrian Institute for Advanced Studies (2016), local students, so-termed BildungsinländerInnen, implying those who possess Austrian citizenship and a school certificate, tend to be financially and psychologically satisfied with their student status²² - *Unter den BildungsinländerInnen gibt mehr als die Hälfte an, gut oder sehr gut mit den ihnen zur Verfügung stehenden finanziellen Ressourcen auszukommen (p.119)*. The authors emphasize the multichanneling of incoming help including family support, complemented by state-provided benefits (Familien-, Studien-, Wohnbeihilfe), and university-funded scholarships which could be obtained due to personal efforts and study success (Selbsterhalter-, Studienabschluss- and Leistungsstipendien). If the work is involved, it prones to serve rather in terms of

²¹ In Austria, it is sociologists funded by BMBWF who predominately conduct large-scale researches on both domestic and international students. As the provided data and conclusions tend to present a similar picture, for the present thesis, I take the average trends.

²² It goes without saying that the presented data reflect the students’ status quo in terms of tendencies, and not as universal patterns: “BildungsinländerInnen” differentiate on social background, family income - relationships with parents and their readiness to support an offspring varies as well.

additional income than means of survival. The next dolls represent neighbouring Germany, South Tirol and Switzerland sharing a common language and cultural milieu; alongside with them wealthy Northern European countries, or, particularly, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland and Iceland, are nested, as well as Japan and South Korea. As a rule, these students are either enrolled in temporary Erasmus, or regular international education programmes running in English, and heavily rely on various scholarships obtained in the country of origin, as well as on family support. Furthermore, they are authorized to enter barrier-free into the Austrian labour market²³ and, in case of study success, to apply for a “Leistungsstipendium”²⁴. What I have found especially interesting is, that German-speaking “foreign” students prone to complain about language discrimination (“for sounding not in the Austrian manner”) on part of Austrian services and work colleagues; at the same time, they admit accessibility of Austrian higher education and a low input threshold unlike that in the homeland. As against their university peers from wealthy welfare states, EU students from Central and (South) Eastern European states experience university routine and life in migration in more problematic terms, balancing between “being a student” and “becoming a labour migrant in the Western European context”: they indicate difficulties in obtaining study-related grants and scholarships at a homecountry, as well as limiting parents’ support (for instance, due to the difference in currency weight) - as a rule, it goes about self-sponsored students who combine work and study.

Student visa holders in the Austrian context are non-EU citizens, aka “third country nationals”²⁵, Drittstaatsangehörige, who are unauthorized to in-move freely to EU countries unless a particular purpose of stay is legally provided: it could be tourism, working issues, medical treatment, education, family reunification etc. As per definition, non-EU “internationally mobile students” are obliged to apply yearly for a visa permission in order to stay and study in Austria; the initial application must be

²³ It doesn’t refer to Japan and South Korea.

²⁴ “Leistungsstipendium” refers to a temporary financial rewarding for an above-average student success. <https://studienpraeses.univie.ac.at/stipendien/leistungsstipendium-nach-dem-studfg/>

²⁵ According to my observations, it is American students who perceive their status of “third country nationals” within the European framework most painfully.

submitted at the Austrian Embassy at a homeland. What does an Austrian student visa expect from its holder? Generally speaking, the requirements refer to two major fields, which a student commonly confronts to - study and work. As far as study regulations are concerned, non-EU students assume the obligation to pay a double tuition fee (by the present moment, it comprises 745 euros including a Student Union charge) falling each academic term, as well as to confirm study success measured in the amount of ECTS points (comprising at least 16 per year). Student visa holders are partially excluded from Austrian labour market and from all financial study-related programmes offered by Austrian universities and a state welfare system: it is somehow expected at the stage of visa application that a student to-be possesses all the necessary means which guarantee his/her comfortable existence abroad.

In the case of Russia, as it often happens to transitory societies, the dismantling of the services from the states' shoulders brings the significance of both family agency and informal networks in an individual life trajectory to the fore (Kajanus 2015; Bryceson 2019): all the minors and a better part of youngsters have come to Vienna being financed by their families back at home - state-provided scholarships are a rare exception granted predominately to highly-qualified scientific workers on a short-term basis. As the center of help backboning student's life in a host destination heavily falls on the family shoulders, it makes a reference to some sort of transnational household and capital migration particularly relevant - not coincidentally, in the empirical part, the influencing role of family in a student's migration process is drawn a particular attention to.



The cultural and political hierarchy of international students in the Austrian context, from a standpoint of legal hurdles, born costs, and an access to the labour market, social and university benefits²⁶.

A great part of non-EU students comes to Vienna as “unregular students”, implying those de-jure enrolled at the university, but who are obliged to have one or several exams (e.g. in German, mathematics, chemistry, geography etc.)²⁷ complemented in order to proceed with the regular studies. In this regards, a network of university-tied system of preparatory courses serves as a mediator bridging a student towards the future university curriculum. Before 2016, students used to be authorized to attend the courses for the time period up to two years, since 2016 - no longer than one year²⁸; price policy didn't avoid alterations as well, by zooming up from 450 up to 1300 euros per semester. Furthermore, until 2019 it had been possible to obtain a student visa for Austria without any confirmation of the German language proficiency and catch up with the required certificates (Österreichisches Sprachdiplom B2, Ergänzungsprüfung aus Deutsch B2/2) at the German preparatory courses, which took place at Orient Gesellschaft, Sprachzentrum and Vorstudienlehrgangsinstitut. Since January 2019, a German proficiency at A2 pre-intermediate level is required for a preparatory course admission procedure²⁹ and a German language certificate confirming at least C1 advanced level - for the study itself.

Notwithstanding the tightening, by and large addressed to the preparatory system, migration rate regarding student visa holders remains positive. As per the data provided by Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research,

²⁶ Here, there is a regional divergency as well. As per the survey titled “Internationale Studierende. Zusatzbericht der Studierenden-Sozialerhebung”(2015), the unhappiest and the most financially burdened students from the third countries come from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Serbia, and Turkey (Ibid, p. 66)

²⁷ The information concerning the complemented exams a student gets in the admission letter, like in my case:” Die positive Ablegung folgender Leistung(en) wird Ihnen VOR der tatsächlichen Zulassung zum ordentlichen Studium vorgeschrieben: Ergänzungsprüfung Deutsch (Niveau B2/2)”.

²⁸ <https://vorstudienlehrgang.at/de/wien/kurse/>

²⁹ <https://www.wu.ac.at/en/programs/application-and-admission/language/>

Bundesministerium für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Wirtschaft, an overall number of non-EU students in universities of Vienna (including the private ones) and Universities of Applied Sciences (Fachhochschule) for the timespan 2000-2017 has almost tripled, from 7 629 in 2001 to 22 652 in 2017. The amount of regular students from Russia has fast quintupled, from 404 (5% of all non-EU students in Vienna) in 2001 to 2 144 in 2017 (9%).

As mentioned, prior to arrival, a student submits an initial application in the Austrian embassy at a homecountry. A year after, on-hand residence permission could be extended at a local register office in Vienna - provided all the necessary requirements are fulfilled, u.a. the confirmation of study success (at least 16 ECTS for a previous year), accommodation, and financial resources depending on a person's age and a marital status³⁰. To wit: students under 24 years must prove a monthly income of 502,24 euros netto, that is, not including rental and insurance charges, for persons over 24 years, as well as for married couples the sum almost doubles making 1. 363,52 euros netto, for each child in a household 140,32 euros are added³¹. Student visa must be prolonged on a yearly basis assuming that the mentioned commitments are met.

According to the Austrian migration regulations, third country nationals are authorized to take up employment up to 20 hours/a week regardless a study cycle - that of Master's or Bachelor's. It is a novelty in regulations, as before 2017 bachelor students used to be permitted to have 10 hours employment per week. Official work permission, Arbeitsbewilligung, is granted by Austrian labour market service (Arbeitsmarktservice, AMS) for migrants, processing procedure takes on average 6 weeks time³².

³⁰<https://www.wien.gv.at/amtshelfer/dokumente/aufenthalt/aufenthaltsbewilligung/bescheinigungen/studierender.html>

³¹ Every year the requirements concerning a visa extension change; relevant novelties could be found at ÖH web page.

³²<https://www.ams.at/unternehmen/service-zur-personalsuche/beschaeftigung-auslaendischer-arbeitskraefte>. An extended waiting period (up to 6 weeks) is indeed a powerful mechanism of a student's exclusion from Austrian labor market - under these circumstances, finding an employment could be quite challengeable, what in its turn provokes certain migration behaviour in this regard (f.g. working within Russian-speaking community, searching a job through a network of mutual acquaintances).

Third country nationals are excluded from all the scholarship programs (Leistungsstipendium, Förderungsstipendium etc.³³). At the same time, a student migrant could apply for a yearly single payment from ÖH (Austrian National Union of Students) provided confirmations of study success (the same 16 ECTS points) and financial emergency are fulfilled³⁴. Besides, student families with little kids could apply for a child allowance, Familienbeihilfe³⁵.

On graduating, third-country alumni are authorised to stay in Austria for the next 12 months unless a full-time job position offering at least 2 359 euro brutto monthly is found³⁶.

In the Austrian context, the established migration rules and regulations are inextricably intertwined with a student's life, powerfully affect one's migration behaviour and, to put it in anthropological terms, provide fertile ground for a relevant student *communitas*³⁷ (Turner 1979) formation. Yet, this "culture of migration" (Massey 1993; Kandel and Massey 2002; Baas 2019) might be paradoxical, with an anticipating status of "being a Russian student abroad" gradually transforming into "being a third country migrant in Western Europe". As research participants have left Russia not as migrants, but as students, the idea of "being a migrant" comes later, in the course of the residence in Vienna. In this regard, the line separating a student and a migrant is indeed very fine.

³³ <https://studienpraeses.univie.ac.at/stipendien/>

³⁴ <https://www.oeh.ac.at/en/service/%C3%B6h-f%C3%B6rdert%C3%B6pfe/oh-social-funds>.

These regulations refer solely to the regular students.

³⁵<https://www.help.gv.at/Portal.Node/hlpd/public/content/8/Seite.080710.html> In this regard, students highlight the dependency of the final decision on a public officer as the legislative rules are flexible and might be interpreted differently.

³⁶<https://www.migration.gv.at/de/formen-der-zuwanderung/dauerhafte-zuwanderung/studierende-und-studienabsolventinnen/>

³⁷Turner coined the term "communitas" to describe egalitarian, unstructured relatedness, which he saw as typical for a liminal phase of rites of passage. Quoting him, "liminality, marginality and structural inferiority are conditions in which are frequently generated myths, symbols, rituals, philosophical systems, and works of art (...) provide a set of templates which are periodical reclassifications of reality and man's relationship to society, nature and culture" (Turner 1979, p. 238). Student visa in the Austrian context bears the imprint of a Turner's understanding of communitas and structure: after crossing the threshold of their own culture, migrant students live in the condition of "betweenness", transition, what is followed by incorporation or reaggregation into society, Austrian, or back home.

Will a student lead a precarious migrant life “in-between” occupying low-waged positions and “eat bitterness” (Loyalka 2013) struggling with Austrian bureaucracy yearly, or one will manage to fully legalize oneself by transiting from a temporary student resident status to a long-termed residence permission, either through joining on the local workforce, or marriage (Geiger and Pecoud 2013; Kofman 2000; Guličová – Grethe), put a great imprint on an individual life trajectory, as well as contribute to the overall capital of migration practices related to a particular host destination. The latter, in its turn, by means of transnational channels tend to facilitate, or, vice versa, restrain the decision to be transnationally mobile: this complex of interconnected nodes comprising of stories, positive and negative experiences of mobility at a micro level, brick by brick, construct an image of a potential other life, enrich places with meanings. In this regard, I cannot but agree with an anthropologist Michiel Baas (2010), who carried out the research among Indian students in Australia, that though migration considerations are “socially embedded and culturally informed” (Bal and Willems 2014), imagination, migration dreams, fuelled by an idea of a new life in a completely new place imbued with novelties, challenges and perspectives “away from home”, might serve as a crucial tool for understanding why people decide to migrate.

1.2. “Discussions on international education are rarely only about education”:

Literature overview

It was Chinese students whose experience of mobility driven by educational purposes triggered off a general interdisciplinary academic interest, u.a. in the field of anthropology, to the life of transnational students. Since the 2000s, it has gradually become evident that a clear motive of stay - obtaining a diploma - is solely the top of an iceberg covering a complex bundle of processes underlying the decision to migrate, the way students shape individual lifepaths and ethnocultural make-ups of sending and hosting destinations (Hansen and Thøgersen 2015; Liu 2014; Liu-Farrer 2011, Xiang and Shen 2009; Zweig, Fung, and Han 2008). The increase of qualitative studies on

transnational students from China, followed by the cases as that of India, South Korea, Mexico has contributed to rethinking of educational migration in less economic and expense terms, beyond a sort of a “by-product” of rational decision-making process as it used to be frequently framed. In the light of new empirical data, transnational student migration has acquired the allure of a profoundly life-changing enterprise - it has been claimed that there is an imaginative link between a decision to migrate and a migrant’s anticipation of a foregoing experience of mobility as altering a personal “space of possibles” (Marginson 2014), what tends to be cultivated, shared and fostered by friends, peers and relatives at home (Bal and Willems 2014; Fong 2011).

By the present moment, two vectors of interdisciplinary research on transnational students prevail: where the first focus on the decision-making, or familiar “push-pull” factors, the second - on students’ plans after graduation (Han et al. 2015; Macready, C. and C. Tucker 2011; Mazzarol, T. and G. Soutar 2002; Han, X., G. Stocking, M. Gebbie, and R. Appelbaum 2015). What decidedly lacks attention is, as banal as it might sound, students’ life itself, their transnational experience of mobility under the banner of higher education. In this regard, anthropologists have made some sort of a contribution - less than it could have potentially been - into the burgeoning field of research by focusing on students’ subjectivity, designing of a transnational hybrid identity, the roles of parent-child relations and gender aspects in shaping a variety of students’ experiences (see, e.g. Kajanus 2015, Baas 2019).

The process of choosing a host country has also got popularity in relevant literature. Thus, for instance, Mazzarol, Kemp and Savery (1997) have identified six interconnected factors which, as per the authors, stipulate a selection of a host destination:

- information availability, overall knowledge and awareness about a potential place for studying and living;
- a share of positive personal recommendations emphasizing the high life standards in a particular destination;
- costs and “social” issues (tuition fees, accommodation, availability of “student” jobs, as well as safety, low discrimination rate;

- environment, climate and lifestyle;
- geographical proximity;
- existing transnational links - relatives and friends who currently reside/study in a particular place and have a positive migration experience.

Interestingly, it was found out that students/student families prone to select a country first and then an institution (Mazzarol and Soutar 2001). Broadly, a host destination, according to most of the sources on the topic, tends to be imagined in a comparative sense as a better place in terms of living and education standards than a home country - it is of no coincidence that researched cases on educational migration are tied to the concept of so-called “moral geography” (Hansen and Thøgersen 2015; Liu 2000 ; Marginson 2006) referring to the idea that states are symbolically structured and ordered in correspondence to the prescribed qualities. In other words, there is a global educational hierarchy, with “studying abroad” standing in for the particular geographies embracing “developed countries”, or, precisely, the USA, Australia, Canada, Western European countries, New Zealand, South Korea, Japan, and Singapore.

Internationally mobile students from developing contexts are generally approached in literature from a two-sided perspective. On the one hand, as outsiders whose “otherness” profoundly affects their migration process in a host destination, and as integral constituents of “cosmopolitan citizens”, on various reasons gaining access, unlike their peers at home countries, to the privileged status of a student “abroad”, - on the other.

Recent anthropological researches (Robertson 2016; Baas 2019) approach an education-migration nexus as a gigantic industry made up of “education agencies”, recruiters, public workers etc. for promoting international students from temporary consumers towards potential permanent residents.

Migration policies and legal hurdles regulating international student migration haven’t escaped attention as well. Here, a focus is frequently set on a complex dichotomy a “desired”, due to contributed fees, versus “unwanted” migrant within the framework of a nation state (King and Raghuram, 2013; Madge et al., 2014).

At the same time, while admitting the growing interest to the migration process of transnational students in academy, the share of qualitative studies reflecting the diversity of contexts their migration provides could be described as microscopic, with the abundance of research studies springing up in the Asia-Pacific region. The cases from the post-Soviet area are scarcely represented: the only ethnographic study tackling educational migration from post-Soviet Russia was carried out in 2016 by a Russian-Czech anthropologist Liudmila Kopecka.³⁸ Such a neglect could be explained by a number of reasons. Firstly, the share of international students sent by Russia is not that striking in contrast to transnational students from China and India, whose migration en masse towards “overseas” has been difficult to ignore. Secondly, a development discourse tends to reduce most of the incoming student visa holders in a Western developed context to economic and political migrants, who (ab)use study as an ostensible purpose for a temporary legalisation, thus placing their migration processes within a familiar framework of a rational pull-push model. In Russia, literature on migration, which is predominately produced by sociologists and demographers, commonly engages with domestic move, or seeks to shed the light on the relocation processes back in the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union (here, as a vivid example might serve a beautiful book “Serp and Rubl” written by the Russian demographer Anatoliy Vishnevskiy). Migration “abroad” from post-Soviet Russia, if approached, prones to be explained solely in terms of “brain exodus”: as sociologists Sergey Ryazantsev and Elena Pis’mennaya (2011, p.24) in their article “Emigration of scientists from Russia: brain drain, or circulation” claim, it has been “traditionally” highly-qualified employers who have got the means, professional skills and ambitions to leave Russia. Continuing, they reach the following conclusion: “many developed countries should be thankful to Russia for providing them gratis with the country’s best human resources”. By focusing on potential consequences of such out-flows on the future of the Russian science, state’s socio-economic and political development, interdisciplinary research frequently frames migration stories in terms of personal successes on part of a Russian emigrant abroad. “An IT specialist, married, three

³⁸ <https://is.cuni.cz/webapps/zzp/download/140056252>

children, lives and works in a Russian provincial town (*ipso facto implying one's poor living and earning conditions*), has got Russian Ph.D., gets aware of a possibility to emigrate to Australia. Afterwards, he succeeds in finding an employment via Internet and gets invitation from the University of Adelaida. Nowadays, he is a well-paid teacher of informatics and a resident of Australia”(Ibid, p.30). The range of methodological tools doesn't prescribe Russian sociologists and demographers to tell the stories of such transnational migrants, for instance, regarding the challenges they confront to while immersing themselves into Western scientific and teaching standards and environment, due to insufficient language proficiency, status as a “Russian Ph.D” holder etc. As far as anthropology is concerned, its methodological potential targeted on participant observation in the field and in-depth interviews could be helpful - paradoxically, Russian anthropologists/ethnographers rarely cross the state's border, on various interrelated reasons: a lack of funding and prestige of the discipline, low English language capacity, little enthusiasm, ambivalent attitudes towards their Western colleagues, visa regulations, just to name a few. To my surprise, the most insightful analysis on transnational migration processes, in which contemporary Russia participates, has been carried out “on-camera” whilst the radio programme “Archeology”(radiostation “Svoboda”). In the release from the 6th of March 2019, quantitative data on the subject were qualitatively interpreted, without running to extremes a la “Russia moves to a complete marginalisation due to the mass exodus of its best and brightest”, and “nobody is waiting *there* for us”.³⁹

1.3. Where do the data come from: on Methodology

The following research is an ethnographic work where I engage with educational migration as exemplified by the students from the Russian Federation who come to Vienna for obtaining a university degree. I approach it from an anthropological

³⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UuvP4k-kn2M>

perspective by employing long-term (2016-2019) participant observation as a core research method.

With a reference to Russel Bernard, participant observation is a strategic method which *“involves going out and staying out, learning a new language (or a new dialect of a language you already know), and experiencing the lives of the people you are studying as much as you can”* (Bernard, p. 344). At the same time, despite its deceptive simplicity, participant observation is a skill, a craft of a simultaneous immersion into the studied culture or, as it occurred in my case, a segment of the society while being able to distance oneself, for the collected data to be intellectualized and convincingly presented. According to Russel Bernard, fieldwork involves three different roles: complete participant, participant observer and complete observer. “Complete participant” implies to some degree a deception, without getting a researched group informed about the objectives. The third category, that of a “complete observer”, is, as a matter of fact, reduced to following people and recording their behaviour, keeping interaction to a minimum. The second role, one of a “participant observer”, encompasses two primary methodological strategies of data collection - on the one hand, a researcher acts as an “insider”, a so-called “observing participant”, through observing and recording the aspects of a group’s life, on the other hand, - as an “outsider”, a so-called “participating observer” who seeks first of all to take part in a group activity (Ibid). My research better fits in the second, a “participant observer” box, whereby I have been applying, as the context may require, both tactics - observe and participate.

Since the times of Bronislaw Malinowski, who is considered one of the world famous founders of social anthropology, participant observation has been inexorably associated with “going into the field” implying the process of data collection outside “armchair” - in other words, an anthropologist leaves a library, or a working place, and sets out for a long journey preferably to the far-located destination, where he strives to set a strong rapport with the informants, through learning their language and involvement into everyday practices, carefully documents observed and heard. Ideally, such a research strategy should contribute to an overall understanding of the studied context from an “insider’s perspective”, thus providing the empirical basis for the further theorization and reflection in corresponding to the targeted goal. Although doing fieldwork a la

Malinowski tends to be shared by some anthropologists, its methodological criteria have undertaken certain alterations referring foremost to the reduction of a time period an anthropologist is expected to spend in the “field”(a years-lasting research has become a pure luxury), a diversifying of settings embracing both high contemporary and remote ones, digitalisation of data collection and analysis etc.

A vast body of ethnographic literature (see, e.g. O'Reilly 2012, Verne 2012) highlights gaining access to the group, community, or lifestyle as one of the primary (and in most cases hardest) things an ethnographer has to do. To start with, ***what facilitated my access to the “field”?*** First of all, I have been studying a segment of the society I belong to - due to my Russian background and a relatively long-time residence (over three years), I've made mental notes and observations, established some contacts and monitored the situation closely over time at two relevant settings - “Russian” educational center “Perfekt” and multilingual kindergarden “Umka”. The name itself - Umka - reminisces of an extremely popular Soviet cartoon character Umka bear who was searching for friends and adventures at the North Pole. Here, the Russian language, as well as Russian “traditional” celebrations like Maslenitsa festival and New Year morning performances, “utrenniki”, for kids are offered - no wonder that Russian-speaking parents making a request for a cultural and language maintenance⁴⁰ are among the common customers. As a consequence, along with BAKIP-educated local staff, one may find Russian-speaking migrants (predominately students) employed as office-managers, sport and music teachers, both Nikolaus and Father Frost, or, as in my case, assistants. Moreover, in addition to preschool facilities, there are at least nine afterschool centers in Vienna (see, e.g., <https://www.rusgymnasium.at/>, <https://www.harmoniawien.net/>, <https://elitelyzeum.at/>) offering various activities conducted in Russian. To sum it up: according to my observations, the easiest way to find a student respondent is to pay a visit to any afterschool center focusing on educational services in Russian.

⁴⁰ Moreover, for some parents (or grandparents), a “Russian-speaking kindergarden” is the only solution caused by a lack of German/English language proficiency on their part. Indeed, I have been spending plenty of time on small and long talks.

Paradoxically, I have rarely come across with Russian-speaking students within the university walls as they are chaotically scattered either throughout the departments, or at various preparatory courses. Short and long-term contacts have been set by means of internet resources (e.g. <http://germanblog.ru/>), purpose-made for information exchange for the Russian-speaking students in Austria, as well as a social network vkontakte (<https://vk.com>), which is much sought after in the post-Soviet area. Students are also richly present in facebook communities Russisches Österreich, strange as it may sound, and Russian-speaking mums in Austria - both communities are alive and well and provide a significant piece of information about a student migrants' life. Furthermore, I constantly look through the internet sites <http://www.dawai.at> and <http://www.rabota.at/> where the updated information concerning employment u.a. for students could be found - such a content-analysis allows to examine the specifics of demand and labor requirements both at the community and national levels. Searching for employment within a Russian-speaking community is a common student strategy, what I will empirically show further. I regularly keep track of the mentioned online platforms, what supplies me with relevant data.

By definition, student visa implies study and study success as the cornerstones of a student's migration behaviour. Although decision-making process is far more complex than mere a university routine, study-related issues are given a particular emphasis. Most Russian students come to Vienna through German preparatory courses, as a high German proficiency is required in order to get matriculated at the chosen university on a regular basis. In the course of 2016, along with the other "unregular" students, I was attending German preparatory courses offered by Österreichische Orient-Gesellschaft and took all the necessary language exams afterwards. In this regard, not only had I acquired an "emic perspective" and built a long-term rapport with student migrants, but also had a closer look at the organisational and teaching/learning procedures.

As mentioned, the major ground for observing and participating is various "Russian" settings providing educational services in Russian. Students are in demand there - besides a good/high level of English and German language proficiency, most of them have a university degree obtained in Russia. I have been working in the multilingual kindergarten "Umka" as a Russian-speaking assistant for two years, from 2016 to 2018

what equipped me with the relevant data concerning the specifics of the Russian-speaking community in general, as well as gave an insight about a niche which student visa holders prone to occupy within the community. I have been employed in one of the so-called “Russian” educational centers as a Russian language teacher since January 2018, most of my colleagues are students as well, so I was lucky to obtain a precious piece of information over a cup of tea.

Student dormitories provide fertile ground for conducting a participant observation. My primary observation spot has been OJAB Haus Donaufeld where I have lived since 2016. As my neighborhood consists predominantly of Russian-speaking student families with or without children, we constantly interact with each other on everyday issues. From this perspective, quite a lot of snippets of my ethnographic data are furnished by chance encounters and key informants, with whom I established particularly strong rapport and whose life in migration I could observe over a long period of time. As James Ferguson (1999, p. 21) noted in this regards, “I knew my informants in the way most urbanites know one another: some quite well, some only in passing, others in special-purpose relationships that gave me a detailed knowledge of some areas of their lives and almost none of others”.

And finally, similar to all student visa holders, I regularly “pay visits” to the local register office in order to apply for a visa extension, as well as to the employment service for migrants which issues a work permission. Bureaucracy and paper work are inseparable companions of every student visa holder: they shape to a great degree a person’s life in the Austrian context and promote the conditions of vulnerability and precarity.

Such a long-term immersion in the broad Russian-speaking environment in Vienna equipped me with a certain holistic framework, a familiarity with a cultural milieu what helped me a lot in understanding the life of students as well.

1.3.1. Lets talk heart-to-heart: Interviewing

To start with, I must admit that informal and unstructured interviewing has been employed rather as a supplementary method. On the one hand, my objective referred to

the meeting formal criteria of a “normal” anthropological fieldwork, on the other, - to back up the data resulting from a long-term participant observation. It is not as if I mistrust interviewing in terms of its reliability (although, to some extent, I’m indeed suspicious about it), as due to a good deal of contexts and conversations I was involved into in the course of my residence in Vienna. In her book, *Qualitative Research Methods*, Natasha Mack (2005, p.13) precisely outlines my view on this issue: *What people say they believe and say that they do are often contradicted by their behavior. A large body of scientific literature documenting this disparity exists, and we can all likely summon examples from our own lives. Given the frequency of this very human inconsistency, observation can be a powerful check against what people report about themselves during interviews and focus groups.* For the present research, interviewing regardless of its form wouldn’t be that effective as a reliable method of data collection - without understanding of the context in which study participants live. That is why, a complex combination composed of observing, participating, and interviewing seemed to be optimal for grasping the studied human experience.

As outlined, in the course of the last three years I have met the students occasionally, at various settings. For me, it was important to come back to my early informants and interview them for the second time, in order to see whether my observations have changed. Firstly, I have made a list of potential interview partners whose life-paths I was to some degree aware of and contacted them individually per Facebook. Here, I would like to admit that all whom I wrote to were receptive and agreed to meet me. As of March 2019, I have conducted fifteen unstructured interviews. From a previous experience of mine, I have learnt that such a type of interviewing could be very time-consuming, so I tried to choose an appropriate time and place for a long talk, which on average lasted 90 minutes. All the interviews were conducted in Russian; I assured all the participants in anonymity. While interviewing, I took the principle “get people on to a topic of interest and get out of the way. Let the informant provide information that he or she thinks is important” (Bernand, p. 216). At the same time, it doesn’t mean that I wasn’t prepared - I have elaborated a certain framework in correspondance with my research interests in order to keep the conversation focused on topic, but I strove to give the respondents room to define the content. To a great extent, it was really

challengeable to avoid an “expectancy effect”(Rosenthal and Rubin 1978) as I had already collected the data in the process of participating and observing, and almost all the interviewers reported practically the same. I attempted to follow the necessary ethic formalities, by asking the permission to record and take notes. Honestly speaking, I haven't taken any notes during interviewing - multitasking is not something I prefer practicing (but after interview was over, I always grabbed my pen and a notebook to write down what I had remembered). As of March 2019, I have finished the data collection and proceeded with ethnographic data analysis.

As Kerry J. Daly (2007, p.224) argues, ethnographic data analysis “seeks to provide a detailed description and interpretation of the way individuals or groups conduct themselves within the context of culture”. Although ethnographic data analysis is to some degree close to the “grounded theory” approach - a set of techniques aimed at both identifying the concepts in the text and linking them into theories (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Corbin 1990) - ethnographic analysis is not that prescriptive. In this regards, Colin Robson (2004) distinguishes three steps of ethnographic data analysis: thinking and writing about the thoughts, creating patterns and categories which are finalized by progressive directing: a researcher progressively moves from description towards interpretation of the data.

Literature on methods generally says that ethnographic analysis means making sense of the available data - the process, which involves “exploring deeply to see what is there that might not be obvious, standing back to see what patterns emerge, thinking and theorising to draw conclusion that can be generalised in some way or other” (O'Reilly 2005, p. 184).

1.4. Reflections on the position of a researcher in the field

As per Karen O'Reilly (2005, p. 142), “social researches are part of the world they study, not some sort of objective, detached research tool. Even your choice of topic is influenced by your own personal biography (...), who you gain access to and the type of access you gain are affected by your age, gender, class, personality and nationality”. Reflective mode of writing is of great importance in the discipline of anthropology, that

is why, I can't avoid but reflecting on my personal position as a researcher. Some of my key informants are either a close circle of mine, or my work colleagues - while conducting the research, it was pretty challengeable to switch over the accustomed social role, stop talking, thus turning interviews into dialogues, and start actively listening. I have been constantly asking questions to myself. Does my personal background influence a research in a negative way? Don't I practice cherry-picking, by collecting the data which are relevant to the theoretical framework and my hypotheses? Do I, as an insider, lose some case-specific perspectives? Hammersely and Atkinson (2007) argue that "fight familiarity", as well as suspension of one's preconceptions make the field a researcher belongs to complicated in a significant way. For me, everything, what concerns a student life in Austria, has seemed so clear and evident that its relevance, to tell it frankly, was constantly being put into question. What sort of new and acute might this research inject into the discipline of anthropology? However, my confidence has grown progressively as more indeed controversial stories, which diverged from an accustomed framework of my own experience and commonly-heard narratives, emerged. The other point was "emotional overtone" of the issue. As a student visa holder, I myself experience various situations, with some of them obligatory and unpleasant - it refers mostly to the yearly procedure of a visa extension and relationships with Austrian labour market service. As the first-hand experience of mine has proved to be rather traumatic, in the course of interviewing I oft found myself fixating on familiar to me grievances, what was apparently false and unprofessional on my part. After getting aware of it and some reflections that followed, I have sought to disengage myself, by accomplishing solely the role of a passive listener.

At the same time, if I were not a group insider, I wouldn't still enter the field in a "tabula rasa" state: different perspectives could produce various approaches and affect the results. As I have previously mentioned, educational transnational migration on part of Russian students had been hardly examined before - for me, it would be of great interest to compare the methods, foci of analysis and the obtained results acquired from an outsider's perspective.

Being "endo-anthropologist", as per Ginkel (1994, p.10), has the following advantages: a lack of culture shock, easy access to the "intellectual, emotive, and sensory dimensions

of behaviour". I must admit that my easy access to the field was facilitated not insomuch by my Russian background and affiliation to the researched segment within the Russian-speaking community, as due to the specificity of the students themselves - it goes mostly about open-minded, mobile, motivated persons who have not a lot to hide. Here, a conjunctive mood would be appropriate: if I had collected the data about the elites residing in Austria by means of an "investment visa", or among the Chechen refugees, neither my background nor Russian as a mother tongue wouldn't have been that helpful.

Chapter 2. Why migrate? On theories

"Nowadays more persons in more parts of the world consider a wider set of possible lives than they ever did." (Appadurai 1996, p. 53)

The following thesis engages with a migration phenomenon, what makes the reference to the relevant theories most palatable. Moreover, as student migrants from Russia are a part of international migration flow, I will complement the theoretical block by approaching the concept of transnationalism.

Although the history of migration is as old as a human life itself, structural alterations at macro, meso and - micro levels in the texture of global culture have had a great impact on the way migration processes are perceived and contextualized. Paradoxically, a global intercontinental context gave rise u.a. to the Western nation state, with a "migrant" to be apprehended and treated as a stranger meaning a threat disturbing a comfortable "smooth evenness" of a familiar setting, and affected migration policy and regulations (see, e.g. van Dijk 1997). Migration, both domestic and international, has often been rationalized and pathologized at a theoretical level in academy as well - in

other words, there must be a strong, oft enforced, pushing stimulus that makes people abandon their home state.

Theoretical bulwarks, which serve as a prime tool for approaching migration, had been masterminded back in the “modern” era, within a separate block of disciplines. It was the year 1998, when Douglas Massey and his colleagues became the pioneers in problematizing a wearout of available methods in migration concepts and research: “The theoretical concepts now employed by social scientists to analyze and explain migration were forged primarily in the industrial era and reflect its particular economic arrangements, social institutions, technology, demography and politics... The classical approach has now entered a state of crisis, challenged by new ideas, concepts, and hypotheses” (p.3). However, twenty years later, the way migration is understood and conceptualized hasn’t undertaken its own “paradigmatic shift”, by creating a body of “cumulative knowledge” (Castles 2008) explaining why some people decide to migrate and the others do not. As Lucia Kurekova (2011) has pointed out, research on migration processes is still lack of theoretical advancement - either empirical data are disconnected from the theories, or cherry - picked, that is, those cases are selected which confirm the existing theories.

Castles, de Haas and Miller (2014) distinguish between two blocks of migration theories: on the one hand, it goes about theories explaining the causes of migration, on the other, - the impact of particular migration processes both on sending and hosting societies. At the present moment, it is a neo-classical migration paradigm, which prevails in explaining the causes of migration. Heavily influenced by Ernest George Ravenstein’s (1976 [1885]) assumption that the laws of migration are stipulated by (un)favourable economic conditions, its contemporary version is based on the rational considerations of financial and psychological costs and benefits (see, e.g. Todaro and Smith 2006). Despite having been criticised on empirical and conceptual grounds (Arango 2000; Massey et al 1998), neo-classical economic theory has strongly shaped public opinion (Massey 1993) and takes an influential position in both academic and policy-related research (Kurekova 2011) - for instance, it was a cornerstone of the

research preceded the eastern enlargement of the EU in 2004⁴¹. Besides, the popularity of the terms “economic” and “political” migrant definitely testifies to this (Baas 2010).

Push-pull model assumes the idea of permanency (Ibid.), leaving a possibility of returning out of the analysis. Migrants are not expected to return, both on part of social surroundings at home, and on a host’s side - otherwise such concepts as that of integration, assimilation, segregation, acculturation (see, e.g. Berry 1990, 2005; Bender-Szymanski 2012) would not exist. Anchoring in the framework of the present thesis, development and “moral geography” (Hansen and Thøgersen 2015) discourses contextualise migration in terms of “failures and successes” rhetoric - who would voluntarily return to a worse, less “developed” place? Nobody, thinking rationally.

Theories emerged in the 1970s as a reaction for empirical changes in the world - World system theory (Wallerstein 1974; Massey et al. 1993), Dual labor market theory (Piore 1979) - sought to explain migration through structural shifts and constraints in the context of globalisation. Despite certain novelties at a conceptual level, these theories could be better grasped in terms of complemented to the classical economic block of theories rather than a paradigmatic shift. To wit: an individual or a household takes the decision to migrate for bettering oneself in material respects, what triggers weighing and rationalizing of decision-making process. As Joaquin Arango (2000, p.285) claims, “migration is the result of individual decisions made by rational actors who seek to improve their well-being”.

Since the 1990s, migration phenomena have been identified as too complex and multifaceted to be explained within the framework of one discipline. In academy, researches have called for an interdisciplinary dialogue (Castles 2008), as well as for a combination of isolated lines of migration studies into an integral part of broader processes of social and economic change (de Haas 2007). As Douglas S. Massey (1993, p. 432) argues, “a full understanding of contemporary migratory processes will not be achieved by relying on the tools of one discipline alone”.

⁴¹ A telling example how “push-pull” theories are alive and well regarding Austrian context: in informal talks with local residents and with student visa holders themselves I often hear that a student visa is (ab) used as a facilitator of labor migration. However, nobody could provide you with a particular case - except for “I have heard that somebody..”.

In the 1990s, with the accelerating globalisation, researches on migration started to pay a greater attention to the existing transnational networks/diaspora what influences decision-making process, as well as the choice of a host destination (Vertovec 2002; Dustman and Glitz 2005).

Simultaneously, with the further development of information-providing technologies and touristic industries, imagination as a major driving force of migration has acquired a growing wave of emphasis. Imagination, fuelled by an overall information availability, rapidly spreading visual content, migration stories in media sources, has become, with reference to Appadurai, “the faculty which allows people to consider migration” (1999, p.223).

In this vein, since the 2000s, alongside with forced and labour migration, collected empirical data have demonstrated a new tendency in a quest for answering a long-standing and to some extent a still open question - “why people migrate”. Pursuing a “good life” underlain by “the meanings, dreams and aspirations” (O’Reilly and Benson 2009) is a conceptual ground of a newly-emerged life-style migration theory, “an analytical tool and an alternative way of thinking about migration” (Benson 2015). With its focus on motivations behind such migrations and the construction of places which are perceived as meaningful, a life-style concept could be better understood as a synthesis of economic impetuses, global transformations and the ways individuals and groups respond to the changing circumstances (Ibid).

Educational migration refers to the post-modern blurriness of migratory patterns, whereby most countries experience a wide range of migration types (Castles et al 2014). A “clear” causal motive - obtaining a diploma and boosting one’s CV - has reduced students’ migration decision-making process and a lifeway choice to a “traditional” paradigm of a rational human behaviour, triggered by global structural constraints in the labour market. However, in the shed of new empirical data, as that of students from China, South Korea, India flowing en mass to the West on educational grounds, anthropologists and sociologists embark on talking of their migration as a “life-changing enterprise” in which “the decision to study abroad is often fuelled by the desire for life change” (Hansen and Thøgersen 2015, p.6). This leitmotiv - a life change - requires a holistic analysis of students’ migration, incorporating both the driving

forces and experience of living in a host destination. After a narrow examination of existing theoretical frameworks within migration studies, I have opted for the concept of lifestyle migration as a core explanatory tool.

As per Karen O'Reilly (2009), a voluntarily quest for a better quality of life shaped by consumption and cultural imaginaries is the factor, which distinguishes lifestyle impetuses from other considerations driven by safety or work. The examples on lifestyle migration (see, e.g. Benson and O'Reilly 2009) reveal pursuing of self-realisation, the omnipresent sense of escape from prior constraints, work-life imbalance, problematic relations (parents and children, divorced spouses), escape from somewhere and something, towards "getting out of the trap" and "new life" - no wonder that most lifestyle migrants share the negative image of the country left behind, what is constantly fueled by skype/whatsUp conversations with relatives and friends, complaining about their quality of life and "encouraging" a migrant not to come back. Lifestyle migration is oft reflected in literature as "marked by power and privilege" (Benson and O'Reilly 2009a; Knowles and Harper 2009), that is, migrants have a possibility to mobilize resources in order to afford the better life (Korpela 2010)⁴². As Kate Torkington (2010) claims, lifestyle migrants are neither post-industrial employment-seekers nor a part of mobile corporate and intellectual elites, if work is involved, it is rather a means to an end. As one might crystallise out of the mentioned characteristics, lifestyle migration represents a sort of a counterflow to those migration processes nation states, researches and policy-makers are familiar with: indeed, poverty, fear for one's life, political upheaval, environmental dangers etc. are still considered the common pushing factors which make people run away from. At the same time, while regarding various empirical data on lifestyle migrants, it would be wrong to derationalize their decision-making process, by reducing it to the romantic "anticipation

⁴² Despite a touristic accessibility of Vienna, a permanent residence (student visa implies a sort of a permanent residence) for the third country nationals is considered as a privilege - Austrian residence permission is a money-consuming enterprise. While regarding Russian-speaking community in Vienna, two prevailing vectors of migration could be identified (not taking refugees from the Chechen republic, Ukraine and Moldova into consideration) - on the one hand, it goes about a "gender migration" implying mixed marriages, on the other, - affluent "investment migration", that is, a migrant possesses more than enough means for doing business and a personal subsistence.

and dreams". Investments in oneself, self-realisation, in one's own psychological and emotional well-being are at core of their interpretation of rational and proper behaviour and the integral constituents of their migration processes.

2.1. Neither here, nor there: Transnationalism

While conventional theories of migration focus on causal processes as well as on potential outcomes of such flows on both sending and hosting destinations, transnationalism might serve as a crucial tool for completing the lacking "in-between" lacuna, that is, a migration life experience on its own.

As it follows from the term itself, international migrants build and maintain ties and impact milieu around them across the national borders. Emerged in the 1990s, the concept of transnationalism has acquired its heuristic value through reflecting "a growing disjunction between territory, subjectivity and collective social movement" (Appadurai 1996, p.189) within a global context, and has become a major paradigm in migration studies (Glick Schiller 1997; Portes et al. 1999; Vertovec 2004). Quoting Ayşe Çağlar, "scholarship on transnationalism provides a new analytic optic which makes visible the increasing intensity and scope of circular flows of persons, goods, information and symbols triggered by international migration. It allows an analysis of how migrants construct and reconstitute their lives as simultaneously embedded in more than one society" (2001, p. 607).

Transnationalism could be better seen as a dynamic process, something that takes time (Basch et al. 1994): the relations between migrants and those left at home are not a fossilized constant, rather they are evolving and transforming in the course of a mutual interinfluence. However, this fluidity - the process of transnationalisation - can be hardly grasped. What does it actually mean to be transnationally mobile? How do migrants (not researches) experience and perceive their transnational life especially within the framework of rising nation states and established migratory regulations which urge individuals take a decision? What in particular makes a transnational migrant differ from his political and economic "colleagues", or these are interdependent

characteristics (for instance, a transnational economic migrant)? Although the concept seems to reflect the cosmopolitanism of contemporary migration processes, there is still a lot to complement.

Among student migrants from Russia are minors and youngsters who come to Vienna alone being at the same time supported by the families in homeland. Therefore, they comprise a part of so-called transnational families - those "live some or most of the time separated from each other, yet hold together and create something that can be seen as a feeling of collective welfare and unity, namely 'familyhood', even across national borders" (Bryceson, Vuorela, 2002, p. 3). As Brettel (2002) and Lobel (2003) point out, most researches on transnational families have focused on the "long-distance parenthood" implying relationship between parents who migrate and children left behind. In the case of student migrants, those who migrate are children. In literature, I have come across the concept of "parachute kids" which refers to "a highly select group of foreign students who have come to the United States to seek an education in American elementary or high schools"(Zhou 1998). Originally emerged in the researches, carried out among Asian minors coming to the USA for a study purpose without their parents, the "parachute kids"⁴³ term seeks to explain the phenomenon of trans-border education, as well as the strategies parents elaborate in attempt to control their children's behaviour (see, e.g. Guarnizo 1997). As already mentioned, among student visa holders are minors, what could be explained by specifics of Austrian migration regulations authorizing to apply for a student visa after school final examinations. In most European countries, as a rule, one or two full academic year(s) in domestic universities are required in order to proceed with a chosen department abroad. In the beginning, international minors are obliged to fill the gaps in their school curriculum in correspondence to the Austrian "Matura" model. For this purpose, compulsory courses in German, mathematics, physics, geography, history, chemistry, biology, which are conducted at VWU, Vorstudienlehrgang Wien, are to be successfully accomplished.

⁴³ Besides "parachute kids", transnational families include so-called "astronaut families", whereby one parent (mostly a woman) immigrates with the children to the host country, and the other stays in the country of origin (Tsong und Liu 2009).

Transnationalism implies the process where migrants develop identities and social relations in multiply national contexts, than being rooted in only one country. From this perspective, a notion of transnational habitus (Darvin and Norton 2015, Kelly and Lusi 2006) has been developed based on a Pierre Bourdieu's construct of habitus (1984) for making sense of how international migrants navigate transnational contexts. Habitus in Bourdieu's definition implies systems of dispositions, which allow "different classes to distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make" (Ibid., p.5). Habitus being shaped by "past events, experiences and structures" moulds current practices, thus structurizing the world of social actors in terms of expected modes of behaviour. At the same time, as per Bourdieu, habitus, while lasting, is not conclusive and has a potential for change. With reference to Kramsch (2015, p. 463), "reading Bourdieu in French, I didn't find his theory of the social world "deterministic" (...) Bourdieu insisted that our habitus has the agency to act in ways that will procure its happiness, as it interacts with the various field in both structures and is structured by".

In the empirical part, I seek to highlight u.a. the way in which students from Russia, by mixing Austrian and national cultural references, create their own habitus based on experience of transnational mobility and imageries of a good life.

2.2. Ebb and flow of the Russian middle-class

What has compelled my special attention in the course of both fieldwork and a longitudinal residence in Vienna, is a subjective assessment of the Russian students as belonging to the middle-class households back at home. Moreover, students, particularly in informal interviews, tend to emphasize their well-to-do status within the Russian social fabric. I'm not an exception, as I have unconsciously, without a deep reflection on the topic, referred myself and my family namely to the abstract middle-class. To my mind, this ascription definitely deserves attention, taking the

Russian context into consideration. In the present section, I seek to examine structural composition of contemporary Russian society by referring foremost to its middle segment.

By definition, middle class implies a certain betweenness, a historically and contextually moulded middle layer that belongs neither to higher-ups/elites nor to lower classes, *verhy - nizy*. Admittedly, middle class performs as a social mediator, the bulk of society, its stabilizing unit alleviating the hierarchical gap between the rich and the poor: the steadier middle class stands on its feet in terms of financial, professional, and political self-sufficiency, the more sustainable and prosperous society becomes. These ideas went as far back as antiquity - it was Aristotle who marked, "state, comprising the middle people, will have the best political system. If one owns too many, while the others has nothing, their is either extreme democracy, or pure tyranny" (1983, p. 507). As it frequently happens in social sciences, there is no universal criteria differentiating middle class representatives from the rest - the contours are heavily context-dependent. For the present research, the basic understanding of how contemporary Russian society is structurally organised in terms of prescribed patterns of behaviour (again, a traditional reminiscence to Bourdieu's *habitus*), welfare, values, aspirations and demands, is crucial for analysis of transnational migration processes in which Russia participates. Regarding a case of mine, I argue that it is Russian newly-fledged middle class who is forming the demand on Western lifestyle, similar quality of life implying economically and politically safe environment, barrier-free mobility, which is experienced by middle class individuals and households in the developed countries.⁴⁴

Since the yearly 2000s, after the turbulences of the 1990s, which the country came through after the break-up of the Soviet Union, the questions of Russia's new, post-Soviet pathway and identity have gain a vivid currency - the discussions on the middle class and its role for the state's further development have been intertwined in this reflectory tissue as well. The demograhер Anatoliy Vyshnevskiy in his book "Serp and rubl'" (1998), refers to the subject as follows: "there are at least two consequences of the XX century for the country. The first one is material, technological, resulting from the

⁴⁴ Russian elites tend to prefer the countries providing high living standards - however, they apply other methods of legalisation in situ (student visa definitely not among them).

“instrumental” part of the Soviet modernisation. (...) The second one - is more social. Social structure has changed, dangerous polarisation the noble - peasant has sunk into oblivion, welling up with a social in-between”⁴⁵ (p. 420). Vyshnevsky, back in the 1990s, talks rather of middle proto-class, whose collective interests are in their infancy, than of a class in established terms. In 2010, an American journalist Peter Maass, in his book *Crude World. The violent Twilight of oil*, cannot but emphasize a stark contrast in lifestyle of the Russian middle class between two decades - the 1990s and the first decade of the 2000s. As per him, “Russia’s revival in the beginning of the new millenium is one of the biggest issues of the present. After the fall of the USSR, in the 1990s, Russia could hardly has been designated as a country, rather - as a black market encompassing 11 timezones and posessing nothing except for adulation of ministers, a kilo of Uran, and police lawlessness (...) But then miracle happened. In 2004 Moscow hosted mehr tycoons than New York, and the Russian middle class who couldn’t afford new shoes in the 1990s, set off to Greece” (p.204). Maass, as one could withdraw from the title of the book, ascribes Russia’s rapid ascent to the large-scale oil export, c onjugated political and business machinations - what indirectly affected middle class as well.

As one might see from the examples above, the interest in how post-Soviet Russian society works has emerged on both parts - within and outside the country. Perhaps for the first time in official history⁴⁶, since the 2000s, “ordinary” Russians, implying neither elites nor the poor, have taken up travelling around the globe, participating in exchange programmes (for instance, American Work and travel, European Au-pair), they could be seen in public spaces abroad. In Russia herself, social stratification especially on a territorial-geographic principle with the “capitals”, Moscow and Saint Petersburg, at core, which manifests foremost in consumption differences and unequal access to

⁴⁵ An original version in Russian: “Можно выделить по меньшей мере два результата столетнего развития. Один из этих результатов - больше материальный, технологический, вообще связанный с “инструментальной” стороной советской модернизации.(...) Второй результат - больше социальный. Структура общества стала иной, навсегда исчезла поляризация дворянско-крестьянского мира, и начала заполняться социальная “середина””.

⁴⁶ The contacts with the West used to be practiced in the times of the Russian Empire and during Soviet period almost exclusively by a narrow upper-class stratum on a state service. The rest of the population hadn’t had any connections to the outside world, their life had been passing within the borders of a native village.

amenities has become striking (Tikhonova 2007) - however, it has been evident that ever-greater share of population has a potential to afford a better-off life. In other words, in the course of the first decade of the 2000s, something has happened on a structural level, what lies between an old Soviet-rooted party elite on the top and an extreme poverty spreading to a great extent in the dying villages and (mono)towns.

One of the first researches on structural composition of the Russian society was conducted in 2001 by Center of Sociological research Monitoring.ru in cooperation with Expert magazine. It turned out that an enigmatic “middle class”, estimated as 20% of the total population, or 10 million households, consumed a half of goods and services offered by the market, thus forming its dynamics in terms of supply and demand. The later researches designated the Russian middle class as an established phenomenon, although admitting its paucity and dissimilitude compared to that in developed countries (Samson and Krasil’nikova, 2010; Zaslavskaya T.I., Yadov V.A, 2008). Simultaneously, sociologists have put forth an attempt to construct a general portrait of a Russian middle class representative: it prones to be a young/middle-aged, urban-settled, highly-educated and pursuing professional passions individual who subscribes to reforms, democracy and capitalism (see, e.g. Aron 2000)⁴⁷. In 2014, Institute of Sociology on the basis of the Russian academy of sciences, produced a so-called analytical report, *analiticheskiy otchet*, under the title “Contemporary Russian middle class: 10 years later”, which set an object to look closely at the structural composition, values, class-specific lifestyle comprising of an accepted and shared by its members model of consumption, socialisation of children, as well as expectations directed to the elites, social and state systems. In the Western practice, broadly speaking, there are two cornerstone criteria of defining middle class representatives: education and professional status. Standardly, one might identify a direct correlation between a prestige of diploma, obtained skilled, qualifications and experiences, with an

⁴⁷ The latest analysis (Krawatzek and Sasse 2018), conducted by the Centre for East European and International studies, has revealed that young Russians who have a positive attitude towards the West and who would like to move abroad are less likely to vote for Vladimir Putin, have lower trust in the Russian Orthodox Church, and share general skepticism about Russian institutions (including the security apparatus, the local mayor, even NGOs) and politics.

individual status in a professional, socioeconomic environment and earning potential within a developed world society. It goes without saying, however, that a presented scheme is an ideal trajectory of a personal lifepath, as a myriad additional factors must be taken into consideration including that of a family professional, financial and educational background, the place of socialisation (village/town/city/megapolis), the chosen field (science/humanities), established social ties in the field etc. In the Russian context, the standart methodological parameters have proved their insufficiency whereby education and a professional status (like that of a teacher in a public school) have rarely overlapped to a personal material well-being. In this regard, two extra parametres have been introduced while defining the share and characteristics of a contemporary Russian middle class - a level of welfare and self-assessment. The collected data uncovered the striking heterogeneity in the middle class structure, what made the authors to elaborate three categories depending on the proximity to the estimated criteria: the core, the periphery and the potential.

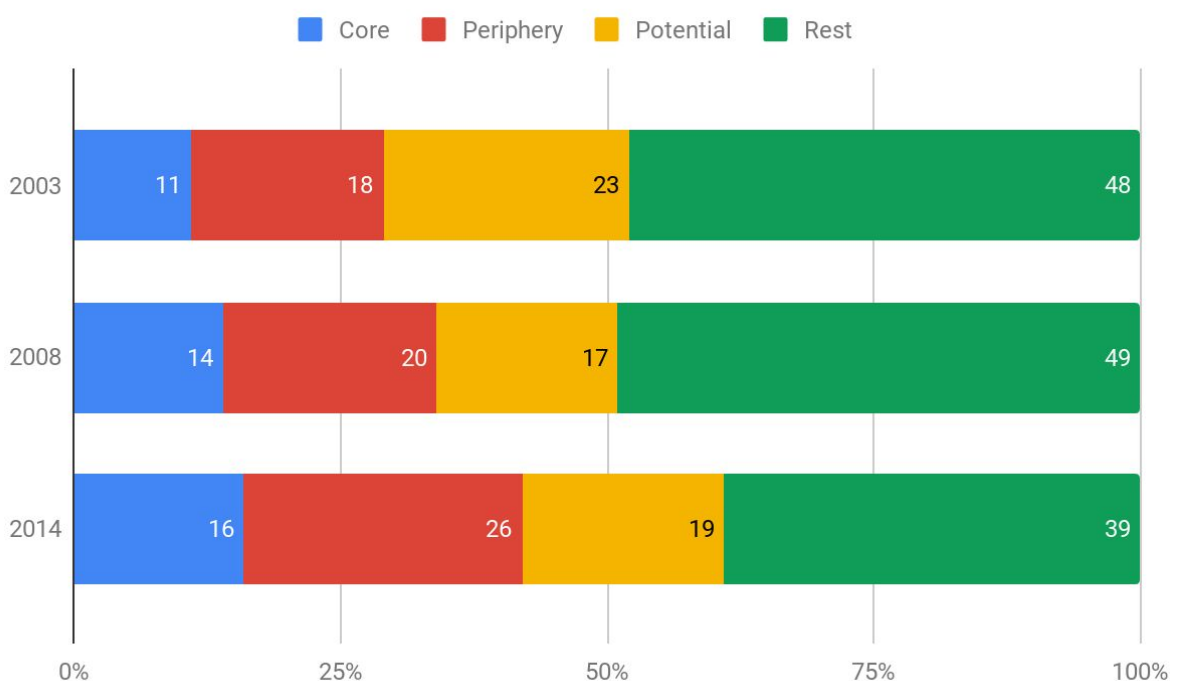


Table 2. The dynamics of a middle class share in the beginning of the 2000s, in 2008, and 2014 (measured in individuals)

Source: Middle-class in the contemporary Russia: ten years later (2014) An analytical report.

The table demonstrates the growing percentage of individuals meeting the criteria of middle class as it is understood in the Western methodology, thus forming a stable “core” of the Russian middle class. The “core” members are highly concentrated in megapolises, less - in regions and national republics, and are practically absent in the rural areas. Among the factors, which block “subscription to a club”, have been both an irrelevant to the middle class requirements education and a wealth status, manifesting in homeownership and a stable income (must be higher than an average in the region).

What differentiates a contemporary Russian middle class from the standpoint of values and lifestyle? As per the authors of the research, among the common values, pursued particularly in the core segment of the middle class, are commitment to equality of opportunities, internal locus-control, and, what I have found especially relevant, its eagerness to make one’s life qualitatively better, by taking part in an eternal quest for self-realisation. Obtaining the second university degree, re-qualification, various kinds of knowledge acquisition including learning a foreign language, interest in science, attendance of public lectures, and a higher level of mobility, *legkost’ na podjem*, belong in this or that way to the portrait of a Russian middle class representative nowadays, which is widely spread particularly in its “young” segment.

Migration behaviour - what makes Russian middle class move and how is the chosen life experienced - remains understudied and obscure. Sociologists differentiate five major vectors of expecting migration, which is generally practiced by the Russian population:

- rural area  towns, region centers (oblastnye zentry) and capitals;
- middle-sized cities  region centers (oblastnye zentry) and capitals;
- city of over one million  Moscow and Saint-Petersburg, Near and Far abroad *;
- Residents of Saint Petersburg  Near and Far abroad;
- Residents of Moscow  Near and Far abroad.

* Two major spaceful and even civilizational dimensions which completely differ from each other in terms of historical conditions and people’s motivation - a so-called Near abroad, *blizhnee zarubezhie*, implying newly independent states of the former Soviet Union and, by contrast, Far abroad, *dal’nee zarubezhie*.

Indeed, Russia is urbanizing with a cosmic speed, whereby Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Kazan', Yekaterinburg, Novosibirsk have become major centers of gravity - not only due to a material profit, but as the places offering a high potential for an interesting and better lifestyle (education, sport and entertainment facilities, a diversified labour market, urban infrastructure etc.). The collected data of mine fit in an actual migration trend: transnational students are predominately capital dwellers, and, as they call it, *potomstvennye gorozhane*, hereditary residents from Kazan', Krasnodar, Voronezh, Yekaterinburg.

Emigrational sentiments of the Russian population, 2014

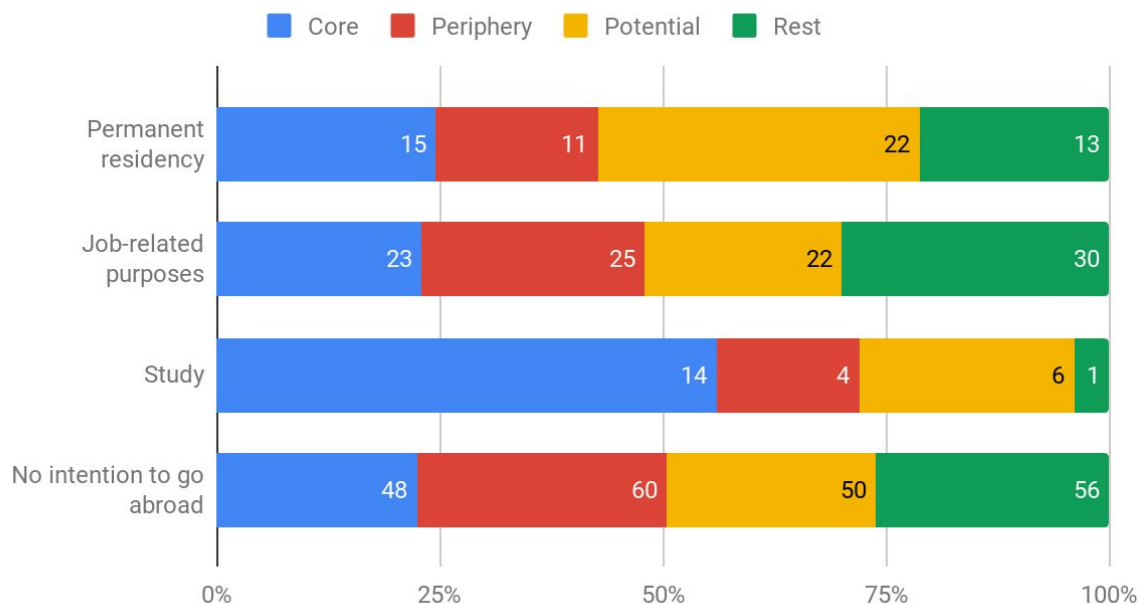


Table 3. The willingness and potential grounds for relocation (%)

Source: *Middle-class in the contemporary Russia: ten years later (2014): An analytical report.*

It seems hardly possible to estimate the share of the Russian citizens residing abroad as many of them pursue transnational lifestyle. Among Russian students in Vienna are minors and youngsters who come to Austria alone being backboned by their families at home. As a rule, their migration on a study purpose is not marked in Russian

registration offices. Student migrants who move to Vienna bringing along their families comprising of a spouse and a child/children tend to keep both property and a job (which is gradually becoming remote) at a homecity - and continue paying taxes as Russian residents while studying abroad. Nevertheless, as one could withdraw from the table above, it is a middle class, and its core in particular, who demonstrates willingness to migrate including that on study purposes.

In sum: Researches, both domestic and international, on the structural composition of today's Russian society highlight that its middle class exists (it has been a popular statement that middle class is no more than a myth in the Russia context), and is structurally diverse. Doubtlessly, this newly-fledged segment heavily shaped in the "gold decade" of the 2000s doesn't look similar to its Western "colleague", taking its Soviet and post-Soviet ("swashbuckling" 90-es) past into consideration. However, the propagated values and practices, which are experienced and aspired by the Russian middle class, tend to be approaching to those in the developed contexts, what could be observed in students' migration behaviour and strategies in Vienna as well.

Chapter 3. Empirical part.

“Why people migrate?” As demonstrated in theoretical section, causal processes, “the nature and strength of the forces” (Sjaastad 1962, p. 80), which affect human migration, have haunted the minds of economists and social scientists since the late nineteenth century (see, e.g. Ravenstein 1976 [1885]), and had been further elaborated at various level of analysis, i.e., the individual, the household, the national, the international, in the course of the XX century (Lewis 1954; Piore 1979; Ranis und Fei 1961; Sjaastad 1962; Stark and Bloom 1985). However, the leading assumptions and hypotheses seeking to explain the origin of migration either through the prism of structural constrains, or individual/ household agencies, are rather a set of atomistic theories (Massey et al. 1993) than a complex coherent concept. As the central core serves an issue of a human rationality that enables an individuum/ a family to weigh and calculate the costs, as well as potential benefits before relocation. Massey (1993, p. 434), with reference to Borjas (1990), emphasizes it as follows: “potential migrants estimate the costs and benefits of moving to alternative international locations and migrate to where the expected discounted net are greatest over some time horizon”. A lifestyle “umbrella concept”, which I have referred to throughout the first and the second chapters of the thesis, presents lifestyle migrants who “seek to reconcile their experiences with hopes and dreams” (O’Reilly and Benson 2009) sooner in terms of constantly changing moods of affluent Western upper-and middle classes than in the least an executed enterprise.

Unlike neoclassic economic theory and the like (see, e.g. Harris and Todaro 1970), which prone to over-rationalized decision-making processes, theoreticians and researches of a lifestyle phenomenon heavily de-rationalize migration experiences of their research participants. Most lifestyle stories (Matthews et al. 2000; Oliver 2008) emphasize childlike naivety of the actors involved, as if a researcher *nolens volens* blames a participant who “might be seeking to live in utopia, but this is always just out of reach” (O’Reilly and Benson 2009, p. 10).

From the perspectives of the present thesis’ framework about factors facilitating educational migration from the Russian Federation to a European country (in the case of mine, it goes about Austria), lifestyle propositions illustrate many of them. To a great extent, international students do belong to the privileged group within their national context, their migration is frequently driven by imagination and considerations of a “better”, meaningful life (Cortazzi 2001) either for yourself, or for their children, which turns studying into a life-changing enterprise. At the same time, a development discourse, with its idea of European superiority over Russia regarding barrier-free international mobility and an overall well-being, as well as power relations in terms of visa regulations, makes students’ decision-making processes and the life following migration far more complicated than just “pursuing utopian dreams and aspirations”. As Stephen Castles (2008, p.2) claims, “national border controls and international cooperation on migration management have become highly restrictive”. This is the major reason of my focus on a pre-migration phase, which mostly refers to the university admission procedures for the “third country nationals” in the Austrian context and visa-related regulations. In so doing, I seek to set the link between lifestyle imaginaries of a “better life” and individual/household rational considerations proceeding migration.

Prior to arrival

Before a student’s foot actually steps on the Austrian land, it will take at least a year of preparation: an actual departure is preceded by two major overture phases. Where the first relates to the admission procedure for getting an invitation from the chosen

university, the second implies managing the paperwork in order a student visa to be obtained. Although the criteria of admission vary depending on the university, as well as the targeted university department, yet, there are common requirements for internationally mobile students from the third countries. As Russian students tend to apply for the study programmes offered by the University of Vienna, I will tell the way it practices admission procedures in terms of non-EU citizens. The pile of required documents consists of a school or university certificate depending on a student's educational background, internationally recognized certificates confirming a high language proficiency (IELTS, CAE, CPE - for the English language confirmation; ÖSD, EPD, Göthe Zertifikat - for German), and a so-termed "Nachweis der besonderen Universitätsreife"⁴⁸ proving out that a student is authorised to study at the university in a homeland. Where the formalities referring to the study background and language certificates don't generate a problem, then it is "Nachweis der besonderen Universitätsreife", which causes the storm of questions on part of the future students and their parents. The point is, that such a document is unprecedented in Russian (and, as evidenced in practice, in the other non-EU states) educational record-keeping, what turns its issue into quite a challenging enterprise. If parents are actively involved in the preparation procedures, all the paper chase including that of a problematic "Nachweis..." prones to be delegated to the education agencies who extract a mysterious paper due to established contacts with some private universities in Russia (unfortunately, it is "Nachweis..." , which is commonly "just purchased" as local state universities refuse to provide an obscure document). Here, I will refer to the advice given on the Internet resource germanblog.ru: "My *alma mater* has turned down my request. In case of confronting to the same situation, refer to the other University, and don't be stingy on the sweets and champagne"⁴⁹. It should be of no surprise as a small petty corruption, bytovaya korruptsia, alongside with a high level political corruption are webbed into all the spheres of everyday Russian life. As Liam Anderson (2012, p.1) put it, "by the end of

⁴⁸ <https://slw.univie.ac.at/studieren/besondere-universitaetsreife/>

⁴⁹ An original quote in Russian: "В родном Вятском Государственном Университете мне её выдать наотрез отказались (!) =(Если Вам тоже откажут – обратитесь в другой ВУЗ. Объясните свою ситуацию и не скупитесь на конфеты и шампанское".
<http://germanblog.ru/obrazovanie/v-avstrii/v-avstriyskiy-universitet-po-vzrosloму>"

Yeltsin's term of office (1991-1999), what remained of the Russian state was riddled with corruption from top to bottom". As a side note, Austrian public officers are perfectly aware of such machinations by threatening to check whether the appointed university actually exists.⁵⁰

In some cases, informal "useful" social ties, known in Russian as "blat" and "svyzi" (Ledeneva 2009; Karhunen and Puffer 2018), are thrown into the fray. Back in my student times at the Russian State Humanitarian University, I used to be employed as a student assistant for two years, what obliged me to deal with paperwork of a various kind. Due to this pretty routine job, I got acquainted to Karina - a secretary of the vice-rector on academic affairs - who helped me get an essential signature and, consequently, a reference required. I thanked Karina neither with sweets and champagne, nor the money - guided in the widely-spread Russian manner of a reciprocity "It's a family affair - we will settle it ourselves!" (Russian: *Svoi lyudi - sotchtemsy*), firstly introduced by a Russian writer Alexander Ostrovskiy in the similarly-named play, we decided to lay my "debt" aside unless the time was ripe: two years later, I supported her niece with doing homework in German.

It takes approximately one month (sometimes more, depending on the study programme), after study-related documents got prepared and sent to the University, when a student to-be receives an admission later, and the second major phase - collecting the documents for a student visa - starts. The initial list of required documents is enormous⁵¹, without sinking into details, I would say that the key issues which students and their families commonly encounter, relate to accommodation and account confirmation. As in the case of obtaining problematic papers, one could clearly identify two prevalent strategies in this regard as well: either the whole process of document preparations is delegated to the mediators, who have their "own people", *svoi* (Yourchak 2006), in a host destination, or students tinker with paperwork on their own

⁵⁰ In this regard, students from Iran have particularly distinguished themselves: "Wenn Sie das Studium bereits im Ausstellungsland Ihres Reifezeugnisses/Studienabschlusses studieren, reicht eine Studienbestätigung des nächsten oder aktuellen Semesters bzw. Studienjahres. (Ausnahme: eine Fortsetzungsbestätigung der Islamic Azad University im Iran gilt nicht!)" <https://slw.univie.ac.at/studieren/besondere-universitaetsreife/>

⁵¹ <https://www.wien.gv.at/amtshelfer/dokumente/aufenthalt/aufenthaltsbewilligung/bescheinigungen/studierender.html>

floating in the Internet and referring to the network of mutual acquaintances. In regard thereto, I would like to zoom in the camera on four specific cases which I was lucky to get aware of in details.

Darya

How did I get a visa? Frankly speaking, I don't know the details - everything had been done by my parents. For the money, of course, 3000 euro or so. They paid to these people from the agency, who had all the necessary documents prepared. I was even met at the Vienna airport, taken by the hand and brought to the student hostel. Afterwards, they accompanied me in a local register office, where I picked my plastic card, Aufenthaltstitel. They were really nice and helped me a lot.

The story told by Darya is common for the Russian “parachute kids” (Hamilton 1993a; Min 2006; Orellana et al. 2001; Tsong 2008), whose migration process tends to be heavily influenced by their families. Most researches on the topic (conducted predominately among Asian college students) illustrate education as the single “push” factor and parents’ concern. As Kim and Zhou (1998, p. 367) claim, “Asian beliefs have been known to emphasize education as the key for social mobility, success, and distinction”. However, the reduction of students’ transnational experience solely to educational grounds have already proved its oversimplicity and one-sidedness, as other factors, e.g., the possibility of permanent residence, must be taken into account.

As the preparation of the required documents is a time-consuming enterprise, full of nuances, assuming some language proficiency, parents prefer to minimize the risks, by shifting the responsibilities on the shoulders of “those in the know” (in Russian: *znauyschie luydi*). These “those in the know”, officially represented in the Russian market as “international education agencies” indeed operate transnationally, both within the Russian schools and universities and in various locations abroad. Due to a high share of such agencies, especially in the Russian megapolises, parents seek to apply to those that have demonstrated trustability and a positive result - obtaining a student visa and a student’s relocation to Austria, ideally in the case of friends or kith. The present example illustrates the significance of individual relationships and transnational networks as cultural specific facilitating factors (Collinson 2003).

Anna

How did my husband and I get a visa? Actually, most of paperwork ran unproblematic as we had all the necessary documents. But searching for accommodation had been a real horror! In the beginning, I did my best in order to find something on my own, via different forums - dream on! The property owners didn't even want to talk to us - you know, some sort of students, what is more, from Russia, - student hostel were overcrowded. I came to Vienna from Yekaterinburg thrice because of this! Finally, we had to pay to a Makler, an extra deposit and rental charges for half a year ahead for 55 m² in Meidling.

Her story echoes that of **Dmitriy's**:

Searching for accommodation was extremelly painful! At first, we tried to find something in the Internet, had many "apartment-shows" per Skype - all the owners required a payslip (Lohnzettel) from an Austrian employer, and we had none... We came to Vienna twice, had some appointments, followed by failures. Finally, we managed to rent an empty house in the remote village near Schwechat and had to buy a car in order to be somehow mobile.

The stories as that of Anna and Dmitry are widely-spread among student families coming to Vienna with children. As most of Austrian student hostels don't offer "family blocks", spaceful enough to accommodate a family of three/four, a private apartment turns out to be an only solution. As the stories above demonstrate, searching for accommodation at a distance tends to end up with a failure. As a rule, these students have to make personal appointments in Vienna, what obliges them to visit the city numerous times on accommodation issue. An absence of local employment makes their situation quite precarious, they are perceived in a suspicious way. The problem is commonly solved due considerable cash investments, whereby not only Makler's services, but deposits and extra rent charges are covered.

In contrast to my research participants, I got a stroke of luck managing to solve a housing question without leaving the doors of my apartment in Russia. I met Maria online, owing to the internet-resource germanblog.ru., where I attempted to get inquires concerning accommodation in Vienna. The situation was complicated, as the time pressed, and the rented square meters were still not going to loom on the horizon - student hostels, which I referred to, couldn't offer more than just waiting. Maria recommended me to write personally to the HemleiterIn of OJAB Haus Donauefeld where she as a student had

lived in a “family block” with her daughter. Not only had I made an arrangement with OJAB due to Maria’s help, but also she became a significant source of moral and information support for me and family after arrival.

3.1. Migration as a family enterprise

In the present section, I would like to zoom the camera on the randomly selected stories of the research participants. In so doing, I seek to demonstrate the variety of expectations preceding migration, the complexity of a decision-making process and a manifold of roles a family plays in a student life.

Alina, 23, Krasnodar, a student of architecture (Bachelor program, Technical University of Vienna)

I entered the University at the age of 18. It (coming to Vienna) was not my decision - my parents used to visit Vienna before because of the health issues. While staying in Vienna, they met our “compatriots” who were telling them stories about a beautiful, comfortable and safe life in Europe including the possibility of cheap education. Afterwards, my dad got to know all the relevant details, and the decision was made to send me abroad right after the school final examinations. I was enrolled to German language courses in my native Krasnodar. But, frankly speaking, I didn’t want to leave - I really love my city, its climate. I’m a creative person, what I need are brushes, paints and paper, I am happy when I paint pictures, where I paint them is not that matters. My parents do not want me to

come back to Russia, but I personally consider such an option. I have a strong rapport with my friends in Krasnodar, I see what and how they study, also my field (architecture), and I think that a Russian education is worse, I feel that I lag behind.

Victoria, 24, Kazan', a student of computational science (Masters program, University of Vienna)

I have always wanted to study and live abroad - since I was a child. After school final examinations, I spent a year in America, and I was happy making my English perfect and meeting so many different people throughout the world. Afterwards, I decided to continue my education in Europe, Austria seemed an attractive option as one could start off right after school and the fees are pretty fair compared to the other European countries. I learnt German very fast - I was really inspired by my relocation to Austria. My parents supported me and keep on helping financially. I'm happy being there, and this plastic card (Aufenthaltstitel für Studierende) makes me proud'.

Marina and Dmitriy, 35 and 36, a married couple from Moscow with two children, aged 4 and 8. (Marina studies Masters in International Development, Dmitriy - Bachelors in Transcultural Communication)

We both used to have well-paid positions in Moscow (the only thing what we miss here, laughing). After the currency crisis in 2014, we lost a lot as we had a mortgage in dollars. In order to pay it out, we had to sell all the property in Izhevsk (where Marina comes from), our car and had to work really a lot - thanks God, grandparents helped us with kids. We hate Moscow lifestyle, all these traffic jams, crowds, chaos, it is difficult to raise children there. Marina's company is international, with a filial office in Schwechat, and they agreed to take her for a part-time position. So, we're here.

Darya, 33, Ekaterinburg, a student of computer science (Masters program, University of applied science), married, 2 children, aged 10 and 6

About the likes of me people say "full of beans". I had a good, well-paid, leading and stressful position in my hometown. I liked my job, but I hated the climate there - in summer it was impossible to breathe because of smog, and in winter - because of a bitter cold. I wanted my children to be brought up in an appropriate environment. Frankly speaking, I couldn't imagine my whole life in Ekaterinburg: the same people, the same houses, the

same lifestyle. The life in Vienna has brought me a lot in terms of new perspectives, new challenges.

Irina, 30, Moscow region, a student of political science (Masters program, University of Vienna), married, 2 children, aged 6 and 8.

I came to Vienna in 2012 for the first time as a tourist. I was admired the way people lived here, especially families with little kids. Parks, playgrounds, the elevators in the underground! In Krasnogorsk I was almost immobile - that time kids were little, and every visit to the friends turned out to be a challenge as from September till May the town is full either with dirty caused by rains, or snow, or altogether... And when I saw the University of Vienna, I thought that it would be great to learn German and study at the international University. After we came back, I started researching the requirements, admission procedures, it was long and time/money consuming, but we did it.

As the stories above demonstrate, students indeed differ in life-cycle and life experience, what decidedly has imprinted on both decision-making process and migration behaviour as a student visa holder in Austria. In their explanations given to migration, students seek to rationalize their choice, by providing “for everybody evident” arguments of Austria’s superiority over Russia in terms of overall lifestyle, and picture in a comparative way a potential life trajectory in case the decision to migrate hadn’t been taken at all. *If I hadn’t come to Vienna, I would perhaps get married, take out a mortgage and make long hours at work*, explains a 24-year-old Victoria from the Russian Kazan’. *If we stayed in Moscow, the kids would be sent to the primary school, and I doubt that I would manage to combine school requirements, house-keeping, a full-time job and my own interests*, these pessimistic conclusions are being drawn by Marina, a mother of two. These individual scenarios are heavily stipulated by an imaginable lifestyle problematic routine, work-school-family life imbalance - a sort of a “tender point”, which an individual longs to escape from seeking in migration “a fresh start” (Helset et al. 2005; Oliver 2007; O’Reilly and Benson 2009). The imaginaries of a prospective life at home are fueled by that observed and heard either in a peer group, like in the case of families/mothers with children, or within the inner circle made up of parents and relatives (O’Reilly 2007a; Torkington 2010). Most of my research participants, particularly among the youngsters, highlight their unwillingness to

“duplicate” their parents’ way of life (Korpela 2009). However, it is not that univocal. As argued in the section dedicated to the Russian middle class, due to their special status as capital cities, accumulating major financial and human resources, Moscow and Saint-Petersburg are considered as primary targets of domestic migration and jumping-off points towards relocation abroad (Vendina 2005; *analyticheskiy otchet* 2014). Ever since one was at school, the natives of Moscow and Saint-Petersburg, *korennye moskvichi i peterburzhtzy* (although, to a lesser extent, it refers to the other Russia’s big cities as well), being far more wealthier and mobile compared to the rest of the country’s population, got aware of possibilities to study in a European country - for them, study in Europe, as well as an eventual permanent residence there, is a logic, “normal” step in a lifepath. In this regard, the decisive role is taken by parents seeking to foster child’s motivation towards learning the languages and potential relocation to a “better” place (Bryceson and Vuorela 2002; Bryceson 2019; Darvin and Norton 2015). As a research participant of mine pointed out, with reference to her father, “in Russia one may earn money, but in Europe one can really live”.

As highlighted, Austria is rarely regarded as a target destination from the very beginning. In the course of time, after the admission applications are dispatched in various universities throughout Europe, the positive answer causes the selection. From a standpoint of admission procedures and migration regulations, Austria appears to be an optimal host. Commonly-spread positive image of Austria as a safe, comfortable, small-sized Alpine country, complemented with a romanticized portrait of Vienna and its tangible and intangible heritage, definitely prompts the decision⁵². Furthermore, Austria tends to be placed into the overarching framework of German-speaking area, with order, development, scrupulosity, and pragmatism as differentiating attributes. “Made in Germany” has become in Russian vernacular a synonym for quality. Thus, it makes a point about power of the language - German, unlike locally-spread languages spoken in the nation Central and Eastern European states (Czech, Polish, Slovak, Slovene), is perceived as price and - timeworthy enterprise. This case perfectly meets

⁵² Since the 2000s, Austria, particularly Vienna and Salzburg, have acquired an extreme popularity in Russia. Where Vienna has attracted due to its cultural beauty, the mountain resorts have magnetized fanciers of mountain skiing.

Tatyana's who moved to Vienna without any experience of transnational mobility, as soon as she had finished school in Siberian Novokuznezk. *On the threshold of unified state examinations, ediniy gosudarstvenniy ekzamen, a sales representative on education programmes in Europe conducted a presentation in our class. She was talking of Europe as a fertile ground for chances and opportunities, constantly comparing it to what we have in Russia. Afterwards, I spoke to my mum, and she supported my decision to try.* Tatyana mentioned the Czech Republic as a considered alternative option. However, the final decision turned next to Austria and the German language, what, unlike Czech, has held some promises for the future. Interestingly, "older" students who took Prague into consideration as well, questioned the reasonability of potential relocation due to a "Russian" factor, implying Soviet historical past: where the young students feel more confident in the other cultural environment, the "older" make concerns about their ethnical affiliation as Russians.

During the interviews, I couldn't but emphasize a striking contrast between the students in terms of motivations and experiencing the life abroad. Generally, the most common student patterns in the context of Vienna are youngsters aged 18-25 and middle-aged (in their early 30-s) couples with little children. As mentioned, migration of the former is considerably impacted by students' parents: while reflecting on decision-making process, they refer mostly to their families. *Well, I come from a middle class family, - was a typical conversation start, commonly followed by the rhetorical "Is it actually possible to come here and to live here without a family support? I can hardly imagine it".* To tell frankly, I wasn't surprised hearing it. Although in post-Soviet Russia the new opportunities for socio-economic mobility have emerged, people have a highly unequal access to them: where education is concerned, particularly with regard to "abroad", a family background matters a lot (Kajanus 2015; Bryceson 2019).

Students portray their parents as educated "mind-work doers" who occupy a well-paid position in one of the country's big cities, often travel abroad, but, to their great regret, lack any (or insufficient) foreign language proficiency. To my mind, this remark definitely deserves attention. In post-Soviet Russia, poor (English) language skills have turned in the context of globalisation and tourism development into a painfully

problematic point, which penetrates major spheres of international interaction⁵³. “Russian” English has become a shorthand for the challenges that Soviet - born and raised individual confronts to while expressing basic thoughts in a grammatically correct language. For the national middle-class households, acquisition of foreign languages on part of children is paid a great attention to - no wonder that most of my respondents used to study either at private or at a good public “English-focused” school in a hometown and had practiced the languages at special courses organized in summer holidays. Once upon a time, I had an opportunity to talk to a father of my research participant: with reference to the Soviet writer, Maxim Gor’kiy, the more languages one possesses, the more lives one experiences, he emphasized an enormous role of German and English for his daughter’s life and carrier. For him (and for the most Russian middle-class parents), a good command of foreign languages is an essential component of a children’s global-oriented habitus, to recall Bourdieu (1977; David and Norton 2015). Although it is the children who have, so to speak, physically relocated, the whole family seeks to get actively involved in a student’s life in migration. Besides frequent visits to their offspring and vice versa, parents solve most of the beurocratic problems regarding studying, visa extention, accommodation. As facilitators between parents and such “agents” as universities, student hostels, local register offices act “mediators”, posredniki, whose services vary from information support to the full-cycle preparation of documents. As a rule, the mentioned “posredniki” are Russian-speaking residents of Vienna. Here, the parents driven by an assumption a la “we don’t know anything and we don’t speak the languages”, by means of mutual acquaintances commonly known in Russian as “svyazi” (Ledeneva 2009; Karhunen and Puffer 2018), look for “our” compatriots whom they could rely on. Taking the average costs of such services into consideration (approximately 3000 euros), one follows the way in which transnational networks could be commodified. Moreover, if the problems emerge, parents refer to the Russian-speaking lawyers as well.

The grade of control on a children’s behaviour depends to a great extent on the trust and relationships in the family (Guarnizo 1997). I was surprised how

⁵³ Interestingly, in other destinations (Italy is a vivid example) a lack of English language proficiency is rarely perceived as a disadvantage; rather - as a “nice” part of identity.

minors/youngsters tend to be psychologically mature (at least to whom I was talking to), and how freestanding life abroad affects their decisions and lifestyle. Almost all of them realize their privileged positions in the national contexts - it doesn't go without saying that they have a chance to study abroad (Robertson 2016; Baas 2019). They are aware of the costs, which a family bears supporting them, what is more, they try to limit the parents' expenses by "bare essentials" such as tuition fees, insurance and a monthly accommodation rent. Entertainment including hanging out with friends, travelling, extra clothes etc., is usually self-financed. For most of them, study abroad is an important threshold of adulthood as they leave a parental nest and take on "adult" responsibilities for one's own life. As evidence shows, those students who were grudgingly sent to Austria, without a strong personal intention on their part, tend to demonstrate an overall unhappiness and pessimism regarding a studying process and independent lifestyle: feeling overburdened, they fail the exams and return home.

The next commonly-spread pattern of Russian students is represented by family households coming to Vienna in two constellations: either a mother and a child, or two spouses and a child/children. If in the examples above it has been a family strategy in pursuit of a child's good life in the future, which drives parents to send offspring to Vienna, then how is the decision taken on part of these groups (Mincer 1978; Epstein and Gang 2004)?

At the outset, it goes about student migrants who have already graduated from one or several universities in Russia and acquired a relevant work experience. Due to a certain educational background, they prone to apply for a Master's programme, which overlaps to the diploma qualification obtained at home (Zaussinger et al. 2016). However, some of them decide to start with a clean slate, that is, from STEOP and Bachelor programme. Prior to the further proceeding with "push-pull" stimuli on their part, I will provide a brief overview of the current processes which contemporary Russian state undergoes. Before the "conservative turn", occurred in Russia after 2012 as Vladimir Putin assumed the office for the third time, the emmigration rate from the Russian Federation could be estimated as relatively low being caused by better job offers, higher earning potential, curiosity, international marriages. Since 2012, the situation has been gathering pace and obtained the other facet: according to the Russia's state statistical agency, 350 000

people emigrated from Russia in 2015, what 10 times more than five years ago, and as a Russian scholar Olga Maltseva put it, this refers to “Russia’s best and brightest”⁵⁴ (Maltseva 2016), meaning well-educated middle class whose interests and demands didn’t correspond to the political course. Russia’s annexation of the Crimea peninsula in 2014, military actions on Donbass and sanctions laid upon the Russian elite triggered the course on isolationism, anti-Westernism and “true patriotism” within a Russian political discourse (Suslov 2017). As a pro-state journalist Maxim Kononenko expressed it, “Russian World is here (Russia), not in London, or Spain. We must learn to live at home”⁵⁵.

The propagated “stability” under the leadership of a “strong leader whom everybody respects and fears” has made a stark contrast with the real life outdoors - the growing discrepancy between the state course, “turn of the screw” and their ideas, based on the images brought from Western Europe and North America.⁵⁶ Whereas in the 2000s, it was predominately the kids who were sent away for a better life, then after the state had kept on “tightening the screws”, an emigration topic became a “hot button” for the newly-fledged middle-class parents who are mostly in their 30s. It goes about so-called “global Russians”⁵⁷ referring to the educated individuals employed in the field of information technologies, human resources, analytics etc., with a good/high language proficiency. Formally stipulated by the large political framework - “it will be only worse”, *dal’she budet tol’ko huzhe*, - education abroad in their case is an integral part of a “do-it-yourself biography” (Beck 1992) and self-realisation. However, the other source of motivation comes from their family, or, particularly, from a “children’s factor” (Benson and O’Reilly 2009; Matthews et al. 2000). For these parents, Vienna is valued as an ideal environment for raising the children: whereas a frantic and pulsating life in Moscow might be considered as attractive for “healthy and wealthy child-free”, families with children prefer more family-friendly “lazy and slow-paced” Vienna.

⁵⁴ <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/problem-russias-best-and-brightest>.

⁵⁵ <https://iz.ru/news/583142>

⁵⁶ Russian political elite and celebrities rarely reside in the country of origin preferring (secretely) European comfort to patriotic sentiments.

⁵⁷ <https://www.dur.ac.uk/owri/subprojects/globalrussians/>

A 32-year-old Victoria has never been to Vienna before migration. After she got divorced in 2013, her daughter was eight. Due to high English proficiency and a diploma in the field of marketing, she managed to build a successful career as a sales manager in Samara. Afterwards, all of a sudden it became “suffocating” to stay in the apartment, which she shared with her beloved daughter, mother and chihuahua, to meet the work colleagues, even to drive the car. Without any further hesitations, she took up getting inquiries on educational programmes abroad. The first “candidate” for relocation used to be Sweden, however, she got refused of the visa. Then, Victoria decided to try her luck by applying both to the Free University of Berlin and the University of Vienna - the latter responded fast and positive.

Victoria’s story illustrates migration as an endeavour to flee from real life hardships such as divorce, or problematic relationships (Benson and O’Reilly 2009; Kopecká 2016).

Unlike Victoria, some students have gathered transnational experience, by visiting or temporary residing “abroad” before relocation, what refers to the impacting role of tourism and previous experiences of mobility in decision-making process (Schmitt 1968; Urry 2002; Williams and Hall 2000). In the course of the interviews, “tourist gaze” (Urry 2002), expressed by “an overall beauty and welfare”, have been clearly pronounced as a major driving force, enabling student migrants and their families visualise, imagine and construct a host destination in details prior to migration. *While in the underground, I observed the mothers with strollers managing to move around the city by means of elevators - I could have never imagined to be mobile in a similar way in Russia*, explains Elena, a mother of two, who came to Austria on a student visa. *Vienna is indeed a luxurious city, beautiful and proud, I was thinking that once I could become a part of it, walk endless along these streets*”, in this full of epithets, way Ol’ga recalls her impressions.

Compared to the other European capitals, Vienna is perceived as rather safe and quite. *I was, well, plus-minus everywhere in Europe. In Paris it is really dangerous. In Brussel even more. In Vienna it is pretty safe: if there are a gang of youngsters, they are as a rule not aggressive.*

Darya and Sergey, aged 33 and 32, a married couple with two children from Russian Yekaterinburg, have been among student-visa holders for five years. Along with the

“children’s factor”, they emphasize the climate and ecology as major incentives of relocation. *There, in Yekaterinburg, it is impossible to breath properly - in summer because of smog, and in winter - because of the bitter cold. It is dirty all the time. In Vienna you can go in trainers even in January and drink alpine water from the tap.* At home, Lena continues, the kids were constantly sick with bronchitis, here the situation turned to the better.

The presented stories prone to reveal the “traditional” lifestyle-like “omnipresent sense of escape” (O’Reilly and Benson 2019) from prior constraints towards the “meaningful life” (Cortazzi 2001) - most Russian migrants do indeed share the negative image of the country left behind. *Look at Austria. A really small country, you won’t find it on the map on the first try. People have a good life here. What we have, is oil, gaz and Putin.*

3.2. A better life and an imaginary of Europe

Scholars from a wide array of discipline have discussed the power of imagination (Brann 1991, Kearney 1998, Strauss 2006, Salazar 2012). Eva Brann (1999, p. 774) even contends that “to remake the world imaginatively (...) is our most specifically human mission”. It is hard to think of migration without taking a spatial imaginary of place into consideration. As demonstrated in the previous section, not all the students to whom I was talking to had even visited Vienna before relocation - their imaginaries of Vienna and life there were mostly shaped by the stories told by parents, friends and relatives, having travelled to Europe on various grounds, pictures and videos in youtube, even by a sales representative from education agencies organizing conferences and presentations at schools. The others, vice versa, have crossed half the world, what illustrates the overlapping ways in which a high experience of mobility could foster imaginings and drive migration (O’Reilly 2000, O’Reilly 2003), as well as the impacting role of “the tourist gaze” (Urry 2002) in a decision-making process.

At the outset, what in particular is implied under an overarching term “Europe” in the Russian context? As per the latest data provided by a Russian scholar Irina Miroshnichenko (2018), who researched spatial geographies among the Russian

youngsters, the European mental atlas is represented by three separate zones: the core, periphery, and non-Europe. In the imagination of Russian youngsters, the European core embraces German-speaking area (Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Lichtenstein), Benelux states, and France. The periphery is mentally constructed from Central, Southern and Northern European states, as well as Great Britain. Non-Europe is imagined as the countries, which definitely have nothing in common with Europe: Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus and, as strange as it may seem, Iceland and Malta. The following data partially overlap with the results provided by VZIOM (Russia public opinion research center) from 2017 - it is predominately a German-speaking area and Israel that are considered as the most sought-after migration destinations, with a high quality of life as the central pulling factor⁵⁸.

The collected data of mine demonstrate the same ways in which students tend to delineate Europe, by reducing it to the “triange”, comprising Germany, Austria, and the Czech Republic: these destinations are regarded as affordable for a middle-class purse and attractive as places to live in. *Scandinavia is too expensive, the UK either, in South Europe one has nothing to catch, Bulgaria and the like is, well, Europe up to a point* - the following interview quotation illustrates a standard European mental atlas, drawn in the imagination of student migrants and their families, narrowed down to the German-speaking area and Prague. Most so-called “education agencies”, obrazovatel’nye agenstva, with services ranging from information guidance to preparing the documents, specialize on the above mentioned geographies. Austria is commonly advertized as a student-friendly host offering alongside with affordable tuition fees and a prestigious diploma upon graduation, excellent environment, infrastructure and a possibility of a permanent residence.⁵⁹

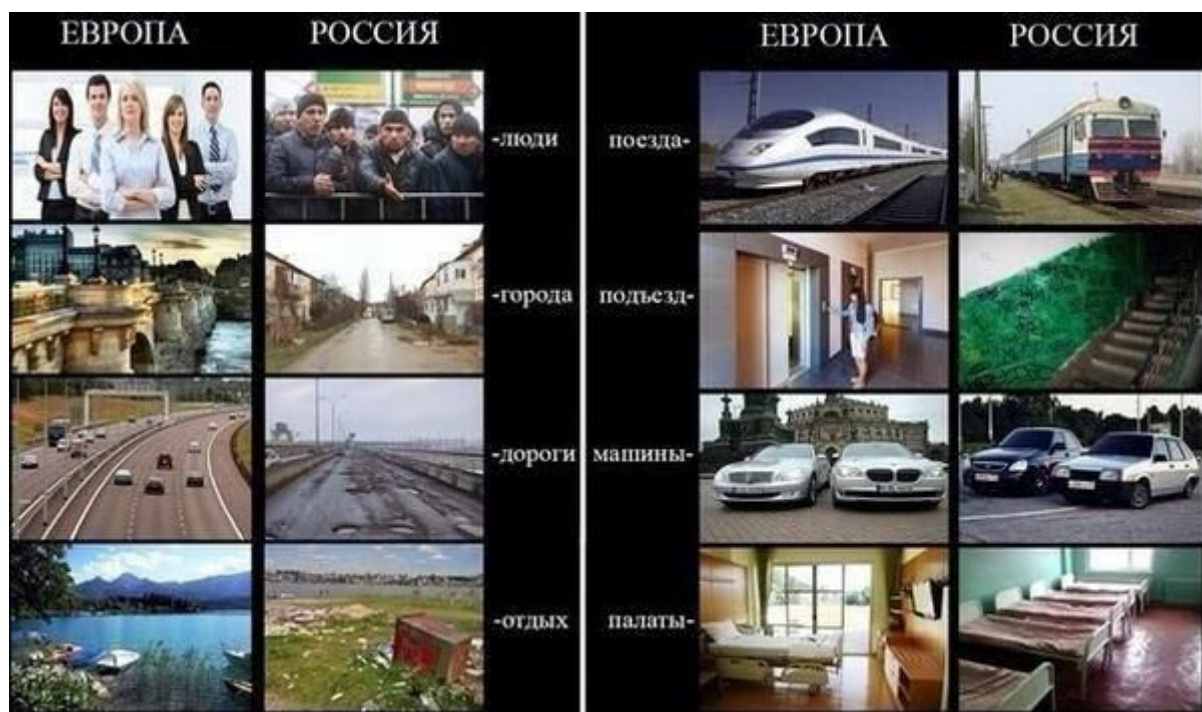
3.2.1. “We will never live like Europeans”: a better life within a development framework

⁵⁸ <https://wciom.ru/index.php?id=236&uid=116299>

⁵⁹ https://abroadz.com/articles/Immigratsiya_v_avstriyu/

As argued in the theoretical part, representation and socio-cultural construction of place in the context of lifestyle migration seems particularly relevant (Buller and Hoggart 1994). From this perspective, Brian Hoey (2005, p. 615) points out, “for lifestyle migrants, the choice made of *where* to live is consciously, intentionally also one about *how* to live”.

It is hardly possible to carry out the research on the Russian students in Europe without taking a development discourse into consideration: the imaginaries of a European life as “in all matters better” than that left at home is frequently represented as a self-explanatory obvious fact.



Source: <https://bashny.net>

The picture above demonstrates the way diverse constituents of everyday life - roads, transport and urban infrastructure, housing conditions, hospital facilities, outdoor capabilities might serve as standard attributes and variables of Russia/Europe development discourse. What strikes the eye, however, relates to a human capital, designated in Russian as “naselenie”, as well - far poorer and marginalized in contrast to the Europeans.

Russian/West European development discourse originated as far back as the XVII century. With reference to the Russian historian Vasiliy Kluychevskiy (1988, p. 243), while in Western Europe “an urban, bourgeois industrialism had been successfully trying conclusions with the former feudal system (...) Russia exerted energy and treasury on the external defense, nourishing the elites and clergy, who did nothing for the economic and intellectual growth of the common people”.⁶⁰ The Russian tops couldn’t ignore that country’s Western neighbours had achieved certain successes, clearly proved out in the wars, diplomatic relationships, trade exchanges, what triggered the thoughts of Russia’s backwardness while comparing. Kluychevskiy points out that by that time, Russia that had got used to the status of a powerful nation, willing to move the states’ borders and enforce its laws, found herself facing a difficult choice - either to put up with its backwardness, thus losing the influential position on the European political arena, or rush after the West. The choice was made in favour of the latter. As a Russian philosopher Nikolay Berdyaev (1990, p.15) expressed it, due to “the increasing instinct of a state power”⁶¹. A proverbial story of the “opening a window to Europe”, aka “Europeanisation” (see, e.g., Bagger 1985), undertaken by the Russian Emperor Peter the Great (1672-1725) in the beginning of the XVIII century, implied the deep reformation of all the spheres of state’s and people’s life: such a strategy was supposed to enable Russia joining on the circle of European nations. However, a whip-and-carrot policy of “Europeanisation” imposed upon Russia’s colonial appetites of “having its own India” (apparently, as it oft argued, Siberia was the only option to satisfy them) established a surprisingly ambivalent framework of Russia-Europe relationships. On the one hand, it was love, whereby Russia acknowledged herself as a disciple of Europe. One of the world-famous Russian writers, Fyodor Dostoevsky points out (1983 [1887], p. 23): “of no case we can sideline Europe, as it is dear to our heart as the fatherhood”⁶². On the other hand, - hatred. As a Russian Decembrist⁶³ Alexander von

⁶⁰ An original version in Russian: “если в Западной Европе городской, буржуазный индустриализм вступил в успешное состязание с капиталом феодальным, (...) Россия тратила свои силы и средства на внешнюю оборону и кормление привилегированных классов и духовенства, ничего не делавших для экономического и духовного развития народа”.

⁶¹ An original version in Russian: “Инстинкт государственного могущества”.

⁶² An original version in Russian: “Нам от Европы никак нельзя отказаться. Европа нам почти так же всем дорога, как Россия”.

Brigen expressed it in the 1840s (1986, p. 329 cit. Sergeev 2017), “Europe would knock into our heads what we didn’t want to have (...) we will have to realize that the dignity and welfare are inside us, and not somewhere externally”⁶⁴. Resulting from its inconsistency, the mentioned “Europeanisation” has been superficial, transient followed by a caravan of counter-reformations: either the reforms were not that effective, or the elites misinterpreted the “backwardness” and its causes, - perhaps, both is true.

In the beginning of the XX century, the superiority of the West over Russia was admitted almost by a general consent: even an economist Petr Migulin (1930, p. 220, cit. Vyshnevsky 1998) in the book “The economic growth of the Russian state for the last 300 years (1613-1913)”, which was published on the purpose of a 300-anniversary of the dynasty Romanovs, wrote the following: “The well-being of Russia’s common people, their level of education and of cultural development can be of under no circumstances compared to those practiced in Western Europe and America”.⁶⁵ This catching-up development has become a cornerstone of Russia’s historical trajectory; Soviet “high modernisation”(Scott 1998) was a very significant phase of the trajectory as well.

Not least due to the far-reaching state propaganda, Post-Soviet Russia picked up the baton in terms of complex, ambiguous attitudes towards Europe and the West. In contrast, country’s gradual involvement in the global processes, accompanied by the consumption growth on part of its middle-class, inevitably affected cultural specific transnational mobility. Whereas in the course of the Russia’s state-being, either in the form of Empire, or succeeded by the Soviet Union, it was a privileged elite minority who went “abroad” and could compare the overall living standards by “them” and at home, then in the 2000s, short and long-term visits abroad has become less exclusive⁶⁶. Of no

⁶³ A participant of a so-termed Decembrist revolt of 1825.

⁶⁴ An original version in Russian: “Европа нам вколотит ума, которого мы сами иметь не хотим, и мы наконец бкдем вынуждены понять, что достоинство и благо внутри нас, а не пристроено извне”.

⁶⁵ An original version in Russian: “Благосостояние широких народных масс, их образованность, культурное развитие не могут идти ни в какое сравнение с таковыми же на западе Европы и в Америке”.

⁶⁶ Less exclusive, but of no case common - culture of travel is still in its infancy in Russia: whereas the domestic “resorts of the Kransodar kray”, as well as all-inclusive seaside hotels in Turkey and Egypt (till 2016, before a jet with Russian tourist was exploded over the Sinai Peninsula) have been affordable for a wider segment of the Russian society, European countries have been definitely less explored.

small part due to Vladimir Putin's "conservative economic policy", which took place in the first and the second terms of his office (2000-2008), coupled with high oil prices triggered off the overall material bettering enabling more and more ordinary people - emerging middle class - to pay long and short-term visits worldwide on the purpose of tourism, work, medical treatment, and education. Those, travelling "Far abroad", have started comparing, by calling attention to the Russia's marginalisation in contrast to the "developed" European neighbours: it is not a political system, or the GDP rate, which have been counterposed, but the overall "better" lifestyle of "common people" that has arrested attention. Furthermore, the growing mobility, either on the grounds of marriage, or working issues, has promoted and fostered transnational networks, with the stories of successful relocations abroad raining down.

The process of getting acquainted with the outside world hasn't been one-sided. Since the 2000s, Russia herself has become a popular touristic destination (quite unexpectedly, while in Vienna, I am often asked regarding the possibilities of travelling along the main Trans-Siberian railway); the Russian language, history and culture have started attracting the followers as well. Business and international companies have got gradually interested in entering the Russian market (at least before the annexation of the Crimea in 2014), what favoured to the establishment of global intercultural contacts. The Russians have undertaken studying English - not only the youngest hoping to increase their earning potential, but their parents who "feel ashamed" of their language unawareness.

3.2.2. Enigmatic Better life

As illustrated above, development discourse in the context of student migration to Vienna is inextricably intertwined with the imaginaries of a "good life", implying high expectations from studying and living "abroad". In this regard, wellbeing/a good life refers to the very complex value-laden dimensions, being moulded, on the one hand, by individual social and cultural affiliation, and by a subjective perception of oneself and one's place in the world, - on the other. As Nobel laureate Amartya Sen put it (1999, p.3),

“one could be well-off, without being well (due to health problems). One could be well, without being able to lead the life he or she wanted (due to cultural restrictions and bounds). One could have got the life he or she wanted, without being happy (due to psychological problems). One could be happy, without having much freedom (due to society’s norms). One could have a good deal of freedom, without achieving much (due to lack of self-confidence or self-esteem). We can go on”.

Researches on a “good life”, aka “happiness studies”, emerged and proliferated within the fields of economics and psychology in the 1990s (Sen 1999; Nussbaum 2000; Fisher 2014). The acquired data demonstrate that though material wellbeing is an essential prerequisite for conducting a “good life”, the other parameters embracing psychological and subjective wellbeing, as well as physical safety must be taken into account (Alkire 2005). For instance, Robert and Edward Skidelsky (2012) highlight seven key areas of a good, fulfilling life: security, health, respect, personality, harmony with nature, leisure, and friendship. Some social scientists (Nussbaum 2010) argue that emotions, aspirations, and imagination are central for achieving wellbeing.

The phenomenon I engage with refers to the cultural, i.e., post-Soviet Russia, specific comparative dimension of a “better life”, stipulated by the presumption of Western development prevalence and superiority over domestic life conditions. In this regard, while reflecting on students’ imaginaries of a good life within a European framework, it is enabled to crystallize consistent patterns: the collected data of mine clearly demonstrate the interdependence of a particular constituent of a good life and a student lifecycle. Minors and youngsters tend to dream of a European lifestyle as imbued with travelling and intercultural exchange, the idealized and romanticized image of Vienna is fostered by its cultural heritage and architecture. Their group of reference is Austrian peers who have “the whole world in the oyster” implying a light touch or a visa-free moving across the globe, participation in various state-supported educational programmes like Erasmus, the chances to learn the foreign languages, to accomplish the internship in international organisation etc. For ambitious Russian students and their families, a successful study at the Austrian University is a source of pride. Interestingly that female research participants point out the absence of social pressure regarding

marriage, child birth and a general outlook. The prolonged (in comparison to that in the homeland) adolescence is valued as well.

For the student families with children, a “good life” is tied to the lifestyle which is, as they observe and understand it, practiced on part of local middle-class families⁶⁷. In the course of living in Vienna these families make relevant acquaintances (which are oft facilitated by children who attend school/kindergarten), pay visits to each other, listen to the stories about their work and free time - they build up new social relations and web themselves into desirable social structures. Such a lifestyle, which is imagined as consisting of a well-paid and qualified employment, adequate working hours, compatible to a family life, free time in the mountains, at myriads of parks, museums seems highly attractive. Elementary education for children is an important driven factor as well. Both school and kindergarten are carefully selected for a child to get immersed into (very oft bilingual, German and English) language environment, additional courses in sports, Russian, art are also included. After a child finishes primary school, student parents as a rule look for a gymnasium (instead of a public/private compulsory school, *Mittelschule*).

Powerful images of a lifecycle relevant European lifestyle are at core of students’ motivations, and tend to influence their behaviour and migration strategies. Here is the question, to what extent is a student visa compatible with a notion of a good life represented by the migrants from Russia?

3.3. Money matter(s): the costs of a good life

Lifestyle migration is oft reflected in literature as “marked by power and privilege” (Benson and O’Reilly 2009a; Knowles and Harper 2009), that is, migrants have a possibility to mobilize resources in order to afford the better life (Korpela 2010)⁶⁸. As

⁶⁷ “Local” in the context of Vienna implies families with a various background who have been living in Austria for a long period of time; have a permanent residence.

⁶⁸ Despite a touristic accessibility of Vienna, a permanent residence (student visa implies a sort of a permanent residence) for the third country nationals is considered as a privilege - Austrian residence permission is a

Kate Torkington (2010) claims, lifestyle migrants are neither post-industrial employment-seekers nor a part of mobile corporate and intellectual elites, if work is involved, it is rather a means to an end. Do the Russian students correspond to this criterium?

Who financed and keep financing your study and living in Austria? I always ask this question not only to my research participants, but to the other “internationally mobile” students who have come to Austria on a student visa. From my personal experience as a student visa holder, I got perfectly aware of the expenses, which students bear before and especially in the course of the first year after relocation. The culture of student educational loans is practically non-existent in Russia, as well as the state-funded grants and scholarships - for almost four years, which I have resided in Vienna, I have met only one student who took the credit, a so-called consumer loan, equal to the amount of 8000 euros for financing her relocation to Vienna. In my case, it was a property inherited from the grandmother, which was sacrificed for fulfilling my aspirations - although, it could provide more or less bearable living conditions in Vienna only for the first half a year. My experience tends to be shared by most self-sponsored students, who don't get regular financial support from their parents. A property sale acts as a capital that primarily covers relocation expenses including those of accommodation (Makler's services, deposits), tuition fees/costs of preparatory courses for the first two terms, a compulsory medical insurance. The size of this capital and, consequently, the duration of its availability for a student heavily depends on the region a property was located: in Russia, a stark regional stratification significantly shapes immobility prices. In other words, a one-room apartment inherited from grandparents in the capital cities could hardly be juxtaposed in its value to the same square meters in a provincial town. However, as study is a long-term enterprise, with an indeterminate duration period, students and their families don't lay a great account on the means obtained from a property bargain - they are too quickly expendable. Besides, none sets great hopes on

money-consuming enterprise. While regarding Russian-speaking community in Vienna, two prevailing vectors of migration could be identified (not taking refugees from the Chechen republic, Ukraine and Moldova into consideration) - on the one hand, it goes about a “gender migration” implying mixed marriages, on the other, - affluent “investment migration”, that is, a migrant possesses more than enough means for doing business and a personal subsistence.

the Austrian labour market: the hurdles implying six weeks of document processing, as well as a reduction of working hours up to 20 per week are powerful mechanisms of exclusion. *Then, how do Russian students finance their life in Vienna?*

The strategies of holding afloat varies with the lifecycle, whereby minors and youngsters rightfully anchor hopes on their families (Zhou 1998). The latter, as a rule, seek to foster a child's study success. "Focus on the study and languages - don't worry about the money", these are frequently-heard parting words for newly-fledged students. In the beginning, this advice is carefully followed: for most minors, study abroad is an important threshold of adulthood, as they leave parental nest and take on "adult" responsibilities for one's own life. On arrival, they tend to perceive study and notes in a "schoolish manner", all the decisions where to study and what to study are taken primarily by parents who also expect good results from an offspring. Hence, not only a local register office awaits a study productivity, but it is parents as well hanging over like the sword of Damocles over a minor's head pushing the offspring to attend all the courses and get prepared to the exams. However, in the course of time, they are eager to take up a student employment. In rare cases, an employment has become a "matter of life and death"- for instance, as a result of external factors like ruble crash in 2015 followed after Russia's annexation of the Crimea which blasted household assets, or the loss of a job position on part of a breadwinner parent. Irina, 25, a student of Germanistics from Voronezh, had to "get to the feet" on her own in a blink of an eye after her father had lost a job. She managed to find an employment at the small two-star hotel, located in the heart of Vienna thanks to the Russian-speaking proprietor seeking to build the crew on the principle of a common language and cultural "mentality". Generally, a hotel is a vivid example of "russification" of a place, whereby most stuff speaks Russian, and the recruiting of new members is also organized either through a web of informal contacts, or by means of internet resources targeted on the Russian-speaking like rabota.at. Once upon a time, I had an interview at such a hotel for a position of receptionist. An Uzbekistan-born manager-in-chief, whom I was talking to, Dilyara herself is a former student of University of Vienna. Instead of a supposed formal application interview, it was a nice heart-to-heart conversation, *razgovor po dusham* - she told me about her life as a third country student. *I know how difficult for us to find*

employment in Vienna, I had been cleaning the floors at the hotel am Stephansplatz 5 years before I found a better option. Students are welcome here.

In other cases, parents make an agreement with children: they pay “bare essentials” like tuition fees, as well as rental and insurance charges, whereas “all the rest” including entertainment, travel, “hangouts” with friends at the clubs and cafes is a student’s concern. Her passion for travel abetted Darya’s employment as a part-time office-manager in the kindergarten Umka. *It’s so pity to get stuck in Vienna as all the borders are open, all the students here move somewhere, and I have always eyed hungrily.* In answer to my question *how did she find a job*, Tamara referred to the Russian-speaking “small world” (Milgram and Travers 1969) in which everybody tends to know each other. *Well, Anna who conducted various sports activities for kids in Umka spread the word among mutual acquaintances that office manager is wanted. So, in three hands I was able to bring my CV personally and they hired me.*

In Tatyana’s case her mother could afford solely the cover of a semester tuition fee and monthly rental charges- due to these “hard limits” she took up employment in a “russified” restaurant “Stolichny” as a clean lady and a cook assistant. At the same time, it would be too sketchy to attribute minors and youngsters’ employment to a purely material factor - some students highlight the importance of individual independence and an ability to hold a responsibility for one’s own life as a reason to search for a job in Vienna. *I know how much my mother earns. I am also aware that rouble falls in value. My conscience wouldn’t let me to ask her for extra money.*

Alexandra who comes from a well-off family says that income not only provides her with additional finance, but also gives the feeling of pride for herself. *If I need something extra, like travel, I could cover the expenses. I don’t want my parents to pay for my hobbies or travels.* Like Darya, she got a job as a kindergarten assistant through the chain of informal contacts. Actually, in order to apply for a position of kindergarten assistant, KindergartenassistentIn, a relevant education, Ausbildung, is required. However, in education facilities held by Russian-speaking owners, such formal criteria could be skipped. It happened in my case as well, whereby I was employed without an accomplished course, but because I “fit in the team”.

In general, a student's family, for some rare exceptions, does not set expectations on an offspring's income, the priority is shift on education. As for the students themselves, their attitude towards study and their life "away from home" undertakes great transformations - where in the beginning, the focus is set on study or preparatory courses, then gradually university is becoming a normality, a routine; a student adjusts, with employment serving as an essential part of a lifestyle, an individual well-being and growth.

It goes primarily about communication channels within the Russian-speaking community as I have exemplified by hotels, the kindergarten, educational afterschool settings, restaurants, which promote students' employment in Vienna. However, working within the community is regarded as a temporal solution unless the study is over - minors and youngsters prone to put hopes on local education. Their dream jobs are international organisations, NGO with English as a working language, or large Austrian companies like Bundesrechnungszentrum, what corresponds to the acquired experience of transnational mobility, global-oriented language and professional skills (David and Norton 2015; Kelly and Lusi 2006).

What about "older" students, those who come to Vienna in their 30-es? In this case, study is commonly a self-initiated and - sponsored enterprise. Unlike minors and youngsters discussed above, in this regard, the family left at the homecity strives not to motivate, but to block the decision to migrate (Bryceson and Vuola 2002; Bryceson, 2019; Epstein and Gang 2004). "Nobody is waiting for you there, the life for you will be hard, you will spend all the money and return with empty pockets", - these are commonly-heard parting words for the middle-aged student migrants. As one of my research participant put it, *"while departing, not only hadn't my enthusiasm been shared on part of my family, I had the feeling of being buried"*. The root of the problem tends to be hidden in an apparant unreasonableness and irrationality of a chosen type of migration - what on earth a middle-aged person all of a sudden abandons a job, sells an apartment, and takes a family in nowhere.

As mentioned, these students come to Vienna in various constellations: a mother and a child, a mother, her boyfriend and a child, two spouses and a child/children. Giving their explanation to migration, many of them talk of a myriad of driving forces, among others

the climate and environment, overtiredness from a previous lifestyle, problematic relationships, - about everything, except for a bettering oneself in material terms (O'Reilly and Benson 2009). However, it doesn't mean that an employment issue has been completely overlooked - the point is, that it hasn't acted as a "pulling" factor, but rather as means to an end (Torkington 2010).

Dmitriy

As soon as we relocate and settled down, I have started to search for a job. Marina (his wife) has already signed a contract, the agreements had been made in Moscow long before. For me, flexible working hours were an important point, as somebody had to bring the kids to school and to the kindergarten. I'm a qualified oil and gas interpreter, after refreshing my CV on LinkedIn, I was offered a remote job position in Pennsylvania.

Denis

I'm a journalist, used to work for the Russian Vedomosti before coming to Vienna. In the beginning, I sought to continue writing for the Russian media, but, as you can understand, the salary in rubles isn't that helpful in Austria. Through some acquaintances, I started working at the hotel at nights, parallelly writing reports on Russia's interests in Africa. I have never set any hopes on Austria in this sense - I prefer working from home, it gives me freedom and flexibility. I'm glad to have left the hotel, focusing on just writing.

The stories above characterize some students as highly-skilled employees in their field, what enables them to "live locally while thinking globally", by navigating transnational contexts (Darvin and Norton 2015, Kelly and Lusi 2006). A well-paid remote job brings a state of confidence in their life as a grown-up student migrant in Austria, non-attachment to a particular place is of a great value.

Anna used to be employed as an IT manager in Yekaterinburg. Before coming to Vienna, she was sure that her IT background would be sought after, and no challenge would occur in finding a part-time position. After first failures, she decided to double down on German working parallelly as a promoter and a waiter at the Stolichniy restaurant - working within the community is a common student strategy. She was oft frustrated: the job in the restaurant didn't meet her expectations, neither did the Master's programme at the University of Vienna. As for her, light at the end of the tunnel glimmered shortly after the decision to abandon university in favour of Fachhochschule.

All the students work. The teachers also work, they are really professionals. One year on, Elena was offered a SAP-position (Systems, Applications, and Products in Data Processing) in the Austrian Federal Computing Center, Bundesrechnungszentrum. She switched over a student visa to a "rot-weiß-rot Karte", full-time work permission. Nevertheless, Elena hasn't given up study at Fachhochschule. If they (BRZ) throw me out⁶⁹, with FH education I'll find the other solution.

Maria used to work as a sales-manager in Samara. On her arrival to Vienna, she hurled all her efforts into a job search as her means of subsistence had been quite limited. *I sent a pile of CVs every day - they remained unanswered.* She was finally succeeded due to the group Work and study in Austria located in the social network *vkontakte* -it was a sales position (carbon black). Both owners are Russian-speaking, what caused the russification of a place and staff. When I was there for an interview, which was arranged by Maria, I didn't here any other language except for Russian. Although she was constantly complaining about working conditions, for instance, calls at off-work time, Maria admitted that *"actually, the job I have is good. I don't clean the floors and I don't do nails or babysitting."*

Anna and Maria made no doubt that their educational background and an extensive work experience in the "everywhere in demand" sales and IT coupled with an advanced English language proficiency would be possible to materialize in most of the corners of the civilized world, to which Vienna definitely belongs too. Maria has found herself in a paradoxical situation of landing down to the international in trade, but "Russian" in essence organisation, practicing, as per Maria, "Russian ways of business running". At the same time, in their attempt to integrate themselves into Austrian labour market, both clearly realized what being a migrant actually implied - where employment gets involved, many students ascribe their status as that of a migrant who is expected to occupy low-waged positions and be grateful that he was offered at least something (Geiger and Pecoud 2013; Baas 2019). It has reminded me of a fragment of a dialogue excerpted from an informal talking that has profoundly stucked in my memory: "When I came to the boss asking for the raise in salary, I got the following answer: Do you know

⁶⁹ After 9 months since the work permission has begun, an employer is authorized either to extend the visa (rot-weiß-rot plus), or to break the contract.

how many like you are in the AMS line? Do you know that I could get subsidies for these people, and nothing for you? As one might conclude, the answer was no”.

3.4. Termin, Geduld und Gruppenarbeit: how do Russian students experience their study in Vienna

The first thing I did upon my arrival to Vienna, was making inquiries about preparatory courses. My friend, who is a student as well, advised me to make an appointment by Orient-Gesellschaft that offered cheap German courses. Oh God, everything takes so much time here, nobody hurries nowhere. In a month, I was finally invited for setting the date of a language assessment test, which was taking place in three weeks. To cut a long story short, I purposefully arrived in the end of February, by the begin of a term, and started learning in the middle of April.

As logic as it sounds, student visa implies an active involvement into the pursued area of study - it could be a preparatory course, or a chosen educational programme at the university. Student's success is a point of increasing attention of a local register office where a visa is yearly extended: whatever imaginary incentives of a good life (climate, Alp water, Vienna's cultural heritage, visa-free mobility etc.) have driven a student towards Austria, they will be always webbed into an educational framework. The harsh truth is, that it doesn't work otherwise.

The Russians rarely come to Vienna as regular students, unless, in exceptional cases, relocation to German-speaking area is finely planned and executed. Although a positive letter of admission de-jure authorizes a student status, the standard requirement in terms of a German (and oft English as well) language confirmation is to be met in order to proceed with the regular studies. In this regard, an extensive system of preparatory courses has been designed for filling this lacuna, thus serving as a bridge towards Austrian university education. Indeed, in their reflections prior to migration, students

tend to have set too many expectations on the forwarding language courses “in a natural setting”.

As most of the Russian students, I came to Vienna through a German language course. As soon as I got a positive letter of confirmation, I took up learning German on my own - as a language teacher, I'm aware of the challenges learning might involve. Elated by the success, I perfectly remember the day, when I bought a Grammar book and dug in boning the verb conjugation and adjective declension being sure that it would come in handy. Consequently, upon arrival to Vienna, I had a basic idea of how the German language was structurized, what rendered me a good service while studying. Most students prone to follow my scheme: as soon as a positive letter from the university is in the hands, they enroll for a language course, or take private lessons in a hometown. Inflated expectations from the language courses through the immersion experience rarely meets the reality: the goal of the preparatory courses lies in enabling a student to pass a language exam, either ÖSD, or EPD, what explains a classroom management targeted on the long-repeated in-depth analysis of the previous tests. All the rest, including an acquisition of essential academic language skills like writing and reading scientific texts, remain neglected - it caters to doing presentations in German as well. There is a sense that a course participant is expected neither to employ German for academic purposes, nor to proceed with higher education in general. Human factor shouldn't be underestimated as well. As a rule, a number of persons in the group varies between 20 and 25 - however, it is not as much a heavy occupation that causes problems, but a sensible distance in motivations and language level among the participants, what makes the study process ineffective, at least unless a student achieves an intermediate step. What stroke me in the course of a preparatory language programme was, that a large share of participants hadn't intended to go onto further study at the university. To a great extent, it catered to EU-citizens stemming from non-German-speaking European State Members and non-EU residents coming to Vienna on a family reunification visa - owing to a fast-track and unproblematic admission procedures to the Austrian universities, they become students in-law, what authorizes cheap German course attendance. As highlighted above, before 2016 the cost of the German courses offered by university-attached Orient-Gesellschaft used to comprise

456 euros per semester, what embraced regular three-hour classes taken place every working day from Monday to Friday within an academic term. Such a heterogeneity in audience couldn't but affect in a negative way a studying process on the whole, turning the preparatory programme targeted de-jure on potential academicians into a kind of entertainment, based on a playful mode. *"The classes resembled those for the kindergarten children: we were playing the ball, listening to the songs, watching the cartoons. If the book was involved, it tended to be a text, each of us read a couple of sentences"*, tells Elena about her experience. In 2016, simultaneously with the "refuge crisis", a price policy regarding the language courses changed drastically shooting upwards to 1300 euros for the same amount of class hours in a semester. The alterations were impinged upon the total duration period an "unregular" student was authorized to acquire an obligatory language proficiency as well - what used to be at least two years, had been cut down to one year at the longest. One of my research participant, Yulia, came to Vienna after the "reforms" had been implemented. Not only did she emphasize the quality - due to the absence of balls, songs and cartoons, - but also the rewarding system of a partial fee refund meant for diligent students notwithstanding their citizenship: Yulia herself, who passed all the running tests with flying colors (implying "ones"), got 700 euros refunded.

One must give the credits, as students from Russia predominately cross the barrier of preparatory courses and proceed with the chosen programme. In contrast to the preparatory courses, which are commonly described by the Russian students in terms of a "freebee", *khalyava*, an immersion into the university environment tends to provoke a real "cultural shock". This might be due, by and large, cultural differences, which are deeply rooted not as much in the field of education per se, as in the methods and organizational patterns of both Russian school and university systems. In Russia, higher education tends to be regarded by state institutions, employers, working and middle-class households particularly in the big cities as a criterium of normality: everybody who has "brains" is expected to proceed with the university studies after obtaining a school certificate. This education status quo has two major consequences: on the one hand, its quality decreases, on the other, - limps the prestige of diploma and acquired qualification (the trend is mostly noticeable in humanities). The curriculum

frequently surpasses the contours of a studied discipline: as per the diploma, in the course of my five-year study in the Department of social anthropology in Russia, I have attended eighty-one subjects and, frankly speaking, most of them were approached on the high spots, without a deep reflection on the topic and bringing in the foreign literature (curriculum was based mostly on the sources in Russian).

Furthermore, as it frequently happens in the post-socialistic area, a seeming overbureaucratization and state-implemented institutions of control keep penetrating the better part of social institutions including that in the field of education: a newly-fledged student (on average aged 17) isn't expected much in terms of a personal self-organisation and critical faculty. The curriculum is fix-scheduled, the attendance is obligatory, knowledge acquisition is commonly reduced, at least in the humanities, to learning by rote. Each university department is guided by a so-termed *dekanat*, a hierarchial structure made up of a dean, his/her assistant, a register, *metodist*, who handles student records and schedules classes, and a couple of student assistants. Careless students who miss the classes without a good excuse are "called to the dean" for clarifying the situation, what prones to come with a sort of a menace of expulsion. Those students who show themselves in the best light during the first course are granted with some indulgence for the wrongdoing if happens. This student/dekanat interrelationship is explicitly reflected in the proverbial "firstly you work for a record book, then a record book works for you". Thus, student's attendance, grades, even extracurriculum activities tend to be in the cross hairs. It is of no common to break the study: while entering the university, an intention is pursued to graduate from it, at any price.

In Austria, Russian students prone to lag behind as it takes time to immerse oneself into the specifics of a local university system, lacking an accustomed "paternalistic approach", a fix class schedule composed and controlled by a firm, controlling hand of the *dekanat*, as well as an "attendance effect" - meaning a student regularly attends courses, what in turn even without other contributions, positively affects a final grade. As Tamara, who used to study one year at the Russian university before transferring to the the University of Economics in Vienna, exclaimed, *I couldn't realize that I failed the exam - I attended all the classes!* Tamara, in her words, *learnt days and nights*, in order to

pass the exams - last year she graduated from the Bachelor's programme, and began with the Master's. In her case, it was easier as she came to Vienna with a high German proficiency, so her focus was shifted to the subject itself.

An insufficient critical faculty is among the problematic points as well. As a primary method of knowledge acquisition at school and then at the university tends to be reduced to learning by heart, whereby reflexions and discussion are rather an exception than a rule, Russian students (it refers particularly to humanities) undergo difficulties when a critical re-evaluation of the information is concerned. As my research participant expressed it, *how could one doubt - it is written in the book, it is published!*

Cooperation, communication skills and group projects belong to the novelties either: Russian education system heavily operates according to the principle "every man for himself". Most Russian students notwithstanding the age emphasize their unwillingness to work in the group.

Although a better part of Russian students takes German classes and successfully pass the language exam, studying process in German turns out to be pretty challengeable. As outlined, the offered German preparatory courses are exam-targeted, not study-oriented; besides, a time capital of one year is too limited in order to get trained for academic writing and speaking. Here, the most common student strategy is attending courses in English, or writing academic texts in German with a native-speaker's assistance. The candidates for flying out are those students who possess at a high level neither English nor German - if the first term they manage to come through balancing on the brink, the forthcoming ends up with failure.

3.4.1. Burned with the knowledge: students' strategies of adjustment

"The experience of migration and of living in another country often leads to modification of the original plans, so that migrants' intentions at the time of departure are poor predictors of actual behaviour" (Castles, De Haas, Miller, 2014 p. 25).

I met a 22-year old Ol'ga, who came to Vienna three years ago from a Siberian Novokuznezk, on the EPD German exam ground. After preparatory courses, she set her

hand to the university studies at the Department of Transcultural communication. However, to her great disappointment, “English” gymnasium attended at the hometown appeared not that helpful: she was constantly failing English exams during a STEOP phase. Her visa was withdrawn, due to a legal counsel she managed to restore it, but as a newly-fledge student of Fachhochschule, banking and finance department.

Tanya’s story echoes that of Victoria: despite having a corresponding diplom qualification back from Samara, she failed in passing the exams at the University of Vienna. Without any further experiments with linguistics, she decided to leave the University of Vienna for the University of Veterinary Medicine, Interdisciplinary Master's Programme in Human-Animal Interactions - what would be impossible in Russia, but pretty relevant in the Austrian context. Tanya’s and Maria’s cases illustrates a common students’ strategy - changing the initial department or University.

Marina was also among the germanblog.ru forum members. She moved to Vienna from Yekaterinburg in October 2014. Marina is my long-term friend and since last year a neighbour in OJAB. She started as “unregular” student due to insufficient German proficiency. After accomplishing a two-year-study cycle of German, she successfully passed a language exam and set about studying at the department of Business Informatics at the University of Vienna. Despite previous education and a relevant work experience in the “field”, Marina found herself at a risk of loosing a student visa - in her case, it was crucial as her husband held a resident permission for family members, Familienmitgliedschaft. She explains her failure through both insufficient German and English language proficiency and a lack of Austrian Bachelor’s programme. Besides, a lack of “human factor” on part of professors is emphasized as well: *they make concerns only about their research projects, most of them hate teaching*. Marina’s strategy was not that unique - she changed University towards a more accustomed form of a curriculum organisation at the University of Applied Science (Technische Fachhochschule).

Unlike minors and youngsters, middle-aged student migrants take up studying after a long-term break, as first graduation took place on average 10 years ago - it takes time to get into the swing of the process. Moreover, a lack of a local Bachelor’s programme intensifies the feeling of the “complete otherness”. As I have emphasized before, this

group of students belong to a qualified Russian middle-class, that is, they possess to a great degree an extensive work experience and held well-paid positions in the hometowns. Being enthusiastic about a student life in the beginning, in the course of their residence in Vienna they prone to get tired, overburdened, disappointed and gradually lose interest: what is sought, refers to the restoration of the initial socio-professional status by means of proper social contacts (Trundle 2004; Korpela 2009; Oliver 2007).

Concluding the following section, I would like to stress that despite a strong effect of migration regulation and visa requirements on a students' life in Vienna, other factors such as family, in situ or abroad, general unawareness of Austrian education and employment system, overestimation of individual skills and capacities carry no less weight. "Russification" of places facilitates student employment within a Russian-speaking "small world" (Milgram and Travers 1969) and contributes to the localisation of student migrants within particular settings in the community. At the same time, being motivated u.a. by a better life and global opportunities, they seek to leave the community in favour of international organisations. The variations in motivation and strategies could be explained by a student's lifecycle and a relevant life and work experience: minors and youngsters, mostly backboned by parents back at home, tend to focus on study-related issues as a principal bridge to future career, whereas the middle-aged Russian "creative class" concentrates on coming back to profession left behind in hometowns, regarding study in terms of a hobby club with responsibilities. As I have shown, family plays a major role in decision-making process and affects to a great degree a student's life in the Austrian context. In the case of minors and youngsters - parachute kids - family builds a certain framework in terms of a student employment. For middle-aged students with kids, it is a "children's factor" that served as one of the principal migration incentive; for these students both - study and employment - for the visa to be extended, on the one hand, and the family is financially sustained, - on the other, are at core.

3.5. “My zdes’ na ptich’ikh pravakh”: Students’ Assessment of their position as third country nationals in the Austrian context

“He that travels in theory has no inconveniences; he has shade and sunshine at his disposal, and wherever he alights finds tables of plenty and looks of gaiety. These ideas are indulged till the day of departure arrives, the chaise is called, and the progress of happiness begins. A few miles teach him the fallacies of imagination. The road is dusty, the air is sultry, the horses are sluggish, and the postilion brutal. He longs for the time of dinner that he may eat and rest. The inn is crowded, his orders are neglected, and nothing remains but that he devour in haste what the cook has spoiled, and drive on in quest of better entertainment. He finds at night a more commodious house, but the best is always worse than he expected (Samuel Johnson 1963 (1979))

The historical quote above illustrates a critical reflexion on the imaginative qualities of pursuing a good life in the chosen destination (Salzatar 2012; Benson and O’Reilly 2009). Many of my research participants have not been prepared to confront to the migration regulations implied by a student visa, high expenses, being a foreigner, *Ausländer*, in the Austrian cultural milieu. “Touristic gaze”(Urry 2012), feelings and reminiscences from the time when they came to Vienna as tourists, enjoyed the city drinking Melange coffee brought by a smiling waiter have quickly faded away: the reality bites once they have settled into the life in situ. Some students, depending on a personality, language knowledge, family support etc., adjust easier - they succeed in organising a studying process, a personal friend zone and find an employment. The others get disappointed, feel overloaded with study burdens and seeks to get rid of a student visa in favour of a work permission, *rot-weiß-rot Karte*.

Students assess their position as student visa holders in Austria as ambivalent. Most of my research participants highlight the uniqueness of this life experience (Hansen and Thøgersen, 2015), the social and intellectual capital (Bourdieu 1984) which they have accumulated in the course of studying and living in Vienna. For some of them, acquisition of the German language, as well as brushing their English up have been one’s dreams fulfilment, studying process - a refreshment and a positive challenge. Again, it is hardly possible to provide a general assessment as students are too different, and the

array of problems, which are regarded as serious, is subjective as well - to put in metaphorically, every heart knows its own bitterness, u kogo chto bolit, tot o tom i govorit. Some students highlight a psychological pressure caused by a lack of self-assuredness in terms of the German language (an explicit accent, despite all the efforts to get rid of it, Grammar mistakes, insufficient vocabulary). The others boil over regarding scholarship programs, which they are excluded from etc.

Although most students are quite content with their European life, they experience a home-sickness, the feeling of exclusion and alienation. Darya, a 20-year-old student from Saint-Petersburg, with whom I got acquainted at German preparatory classes, also pinpointed a family's initiative in sending her to Vienna. However, her study success in German hasn't inspired optimism - she was constantly saying: *I don't see any difference between Vienna and Piter⁷⁰! Oh, I found one - in Vienna one must speak this effing ("dolbanyi") German! I don't understand why Europe is raised to the square.* As far as I'm aware, she abandoned her study and came back to Russia. Anna, 20, comes from Krasnodar, currently does architectural studies at the Technical University, notices that although *Vienna is beautiful and well-located*, Austrian lifestyle is too boring and slow-paced. *They (Austrians) hold their job positions for years, any changes are not welcome.* After graduation she, with her parents' support, plans to leave Vienna for a more "dynamic place" where she can "fulfill herself" (Guarnizo 2001).

However, those migrants who managed to structurize neither university, working life nor make friends - I have met such students in the course of my long-term residence - voluntarily left Austria, their quest for a better life lost its meaning (Benson and O'Reilly 2009). In some cases, due to the subjective and objective grounds encompassing a low level of self-organisation and self-discipline, a lack of a high language proficiency, even a black spirit of a local public officer - difficulties with a visa extension are encountered. Which problems are oft confronted to while dealing with MA 35? My data have revealed two major blocks of problems: ECTS points/a German language certificate, and account confirmation. As mentioned, a common strategy in the case of absent points - changing an initial department or University. If it is too late and *Magistrat* doesn't agree to any

⁷⁰ Informal shortform from Saint-Petersburg.

compromises, students (parents) appeal a decision, by referring to a lawyer, usually within the Russian-speaking community, or helping hands (ÖH structure).

Account confirmation might be a complicated issue, as the amount of required means varies depending on a person's age and marital status. Whereas minors and youngsters rarely meet such kind of problems due to a parents' financial support, student households with children tend to heavily dissave within the first months after relocation, and are almost stranded in a year (even in case an employment is found). Under these circumstances, either a property in Russia is sold, or a part of a requested sum is borrowed from friends and relatives, in order a visa gets prolonged.

Those students who have never confronted to Austrian employment regulations for third country nationals assess their position as student visa holders as stable and reliable. Their more experienced "colleagues" frequently emphasize precarity and vulnerability of their current status. What used to be regarded as an additional advantage of coming to Austria prior to arrival - an officially permitted twenty-hour weekly employment - happened to be a disadvantage in reality (Baas 2010): a work permission, *Arbeitsbewilligung*, with at least six weeks proceeding time period, acts as a powerful exclusion criterium that de-facto reduces students' employment to the Russian-speaking community. Temporary project employment, per a *Freie Dienstvertrag* and *Honorarnote*, are incompatible to a student visa.

I had a job interview in April - it was a position of the receptionist at the hotel. The problem was, that they needed someone now and I couldn't start working now because of the work permission. As soon as I told them about 6 weeks of waiting, I was given a choice - either I come illegally, or I won't become a job, explains Alina during an informal talk. Despite having entered to Austria in a legal way, as "students", their experience of life in Vienna might be not that perfectly right and legal. Regarding such "quasi-illegal practices", Kloosterman and Rath (2002, p.27) talks of informal activities that "aimed at producing a positive effect on income, for which the terms of legislation and regulation applicable to the activities are not being met". For many Russian students, these activities implying certain violations of the visa regulations are a heavy moral choice, which is only justified by limited options and forced circumstances.

3.5.1. Alliance with benefits

Development discourse makes a European visa of a great value for the Russian students as well, what could be observed in the existing behavioural patterns in terms of gender and marital relations (Kofman 2000; Brennan 2003). In vernacular, “Russian girls”⁷¹ are regarded as an easy target for flirting and dating, provided a potential suitor could “help with a visa”(Brennan 2013). This wide-spread opinion/a stereotype provokes a remarkable double effect. On the one hand, an “Austrian”⁷² partner is indeed regarded as more attractive as he leads a “normal”(not a migrant) life, on the other, - such a marriage is frequently assessed, not least by a female herself, in terms of a covert misalliance. Once I had a job interview in one of a Russian-speaking afterschool centers for a teaching position. While showing me around, my employer to-be explained me the reasons of such an urgently required head-hunting: as turned out that my previous colleague got married to an “Austrian”, moved in the beautiful house located in the Lower Austria, got a “normal” visa and immediately quitted the job - *Why should she work with us now?*

A research participant and a good friend of mine, 38-year old Irina came to Vienna from a Moscow district. She is divorced and rears a child - by the time, the decision to relocate had been made, Irena’s daughter was 8. Having obtained a Russian Ph.D, aka “kandidat nauk” in the field of biology, she enrolled for a Master’s programme at the University of Vienna. In the course of a five-year residence in a student status, Irina has changed a myriad of low-paid jobs within the community, which haven’t at slightest approximated her to a happy and wealthy life in Austria. Attempting to keeping up with the situation, she decided to leave the university in favour of a hospital nurse education offered by Fachhochschule Wiener Neustadt - nurses belong to the so-termed “shortage professions”, what makes a receipt of a working visa easier. However, such a full-time education was a pure luxury for her as she had to work simulteneously in order to sustain herself and her daughter. Irina got frustrated, took a child and left Austria. After having worked in Moscow for one year as a teacher of German and biology at a public

⁷¹ It goes about Russian-speaking females coming to Vienna from post-Soviet area.

⁷² In this regard, “Austrian” refers not insomuch to the ethnic affiliation as to the citizenship/a permanent residence one possesses.

school, she returned back to Vienna as a *Lehramt* student- it happened hard to adjust to the Moscow life again. Irina got married a Russian Austrian and get rid of a student visa: although the “whole world” implying her nearest friend circle, relatives and a previous employer was informed that she got a Ph.D position at the university and obtained a researcher residence.

In some cases, visa facilitates the decision to enter into marriage, so-termed “Zweckehe” (Guličová – Grethe 2004). Such a situation is frequently encountered among the couples in which where one of the partners is at risk of loosing a student residence. My research participant, Tamara, aged 21, a very assiduous Russian student of the Department of the English studies, has never faced visa-related difficulties. Her boyfriend, however, a student visa holder as well, was less successful - his *Aufenthaltstitel* was withdrawn. Despite all the undertaken efforts towards a bettering his status quo, he didn’t get a plastic card. Without pausing to think, the two got married cooping issue up with a stamp on the passport, thus turning a newly-fledged groom into a “family member”.

In certain circumstances, the marriage with a “local” might increase a socio-professional status of a student migrant, whereby, on the basis of marriage, a partner obtains legal residence and subsequently is granted a work permit (Guličová – Grethe 2004). As already argued throughout the present master thesis, the line separating a “student” chasing an academic title from a migrant, who has to “eat bitterness” (Loyalka 2013), implying dealing with hardships in the Western European context, is blurred (Baas 2010); in particularly, it clearly comes out in a student’s attempt to get engaged in the Austrian labour market. I will repeat myself that employment has not been indicated as an initial incentive driving a student migration from Russia. However, in the course of a long-term residence, employment issues come “naturally” into account - a student adjusts, feels more confident in the Austrian cultural and language milieu, builds relevant social contacts. However, the best one could hope for, is commonly reduced to occupying his/her place in the sun within a strongly stratified Russian-speaking community⁷³ in Vienna which offeres a spectrum of vacancies ranging from a babysitter (and the other children-related positions) to a well-paid sales manager. A successful

⁷³ In this regard, Russian-speaking community mirrors the same social discrepancy that exists in Russia, with the elites concentrating major resources, and “the rest”.

professional inclusion into an Austrian/ international company is a pleasant exception: bureaucratic difficulties tied to the AMS and a work permission, alongside with a status of a foreigner within a nation-state framework, are indeed powerful hurdles making a student's integration into the labour market complicated⁷⁴. My research participant, Alisa, came to Vienna from Russian Novosibirsk ten years ago through Aupair childcare programme. While taking care of the children, she managed to make her German perfect and enrolled to the University of Vienna. Although she failed in university studies, Alisa was successful in a private life: she got married, left the University for the *Fachhochschule* (due to a husband's advice, the latter was graduated from) and got employed by a large Austrian company. In her reflexions given to the success in employment, she refers mostly to the marriage, the change of the surname and obtaining a "normal" residence: *before I met H., I used to get paid only "schwarz", nobody will bother with the documents.*

I will conclude the following section with a story that illustrates the complexity of a personal quest for a better life while in migration, which could be hardly be explained through the prism of development discourse.

A 33-year old Maria, a single mother with a child, was in one step from a university graduation in Vienna. Academic success was not the only personal achievements: Maria managed to switch a student visa, which became a burden for her in the course of a residence, over a work permission, for a good salary and appropriate conditions. However, she was constantly tired of holding the whole responsibility for her daughter's upbringing on her shoulders - back in Russia, she was backboned by her mother. The other "burden" stemmed from a boyfriend who didn't adjust to the Austria life and left Vienna (as he expressed it, it was hard for him to stay on "her" visa; besides, he didn't intend to marry her). Burnt out, Maria got depressed, took a child and left Vienna in a couple of months as well.

Such stories as that presented above might show the chaotic nature and "Baumanesque" utopianism (Bauman 2008) of lifestyle migration processes, an eternal search for a personal well-being and happiness. However, pursuing to start a new life in

⁷⁴ To a lesser degree this observation refers to IT and other technical occupations that do not require strong communication skills in German.

a new place, it could be not that easy to shed the skins covering their past lives (Benson and O'Reilly 2009).

Chapter 4. Conclusions

Post-Soviet Russia is a noteworthy example of progressing “culture of migration”(Massey et al. 1993; Kandel and Massey 2002). As argued, it is a domestic labour/lifestyle/education move, with Moscow and Saint-Petersburg as major centers

of gravity, *tsentrostremitel'naya migratsia*⁷⁵, which is commonly practiced within the contemporary Russian context (see, e.g., *analitichesky otchet* 2014). As a result of historical circumstances and turbulences, which Russia faced in the course of its state-being, amplified by the decades of physical and ideological isolation whilst in the USSR, caused a sort of a schizophrenic ambivalence towards the world that lies outside its borders, with Europe and the West as the major groups of both a reference and a strong criticism (see, e.g. Vishnevskiy 1998). Despite some shift of worldview attitudes, which emerged due to the establishing transnational links and tourism development, most Russians do regard Western developed countries in a suspicious way, what is ostensibly reasoned by a proliferated concept of Russophobia, that is, “Russians are feared and hated”⁷⁶. However, country’s gradual immersion into the global processes, simultaneously with socio-economic, structural and cultural-symbolic alterations, which the country has been experiencing since the 2000s, inevitably triggered the differentiation of mobility patterns as well.

As outlined in the second chapter, the understanding of migration processes in which a present-day Russia participates seems hardly possible without a reference to the structural composition of its society (Zaslavskaya 1997). After the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991, unequal allocation of benefits at the regional level, a cosmic-speed depopulation of rural areas and towns in favour of the urban-based capital lifestyle, alongside with poor social institutions and a high level of corruptogenicity (Anderson 2012; Ledeneva 2009) have fostered striking multi-facedness of the country’s human capital, what heavily contrasted to the Russia’s historical experience. Who was portrayed as a “common Russian” in the Russian Empire? The giants of the classical Russian literature, Dostoevskiy, Tolstoy, Chekhov, just to name a few, picture an image of a lowborn peasant man, always ready to sacrifice his life for “the tsar and the motherhood”. In the Soviet period, it was a so-termed *homo sovieticus*, which was cultivated on part of the party apparatus (Vyshnevsky 1998). In the 1990s, during a transitory period, as the newly-fledged legatee of the Soviet regime, Russia was balancing between the crime bosses wearing raspberry-red blazers and an abject poverty

⁷⁵ <https://iq.hse.ru/news/177691865.html>

⁷⁶ <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/19/opinion/sunday/why-are-russians-still-the-go-to-bad-guys.html>;
<https://www.theguardian.com/film/filmblog/2014/nov/14/why-on-screen-bad-guys-are-always-russian>

(Maas 2009). As argued, since the beginning of the 2000s, the country has gradually “comes to life”, not least due to the consistent conservative macro-economic policy combined to high oil prices⁷⁷, what contributed to an overall better-off, with “ordinary Russians” slowly, step by step, opening up their window to Europe. However, this process of making oneself comfortable with the world of no circumstances claims the status of a common practice. In this regard, post-Soviet Russia resembles a turbulence zone, where the gap in experienced lifestyles and standards of living between the densely populated capitals, Moscow and Saint-Petersburg, and the rest of the country reaches indeed civilizational proportions (Tikhonova 2007). Broadly, social stratification manifests itself in the unequal access to the resources and benefits including education, health and human services. As argued, for the capital-based minors and youngsters, travel abroad is a part of an accustomed life routine, they are pre-socialized to have a migration experience abroad, what is fostered and facilitated by their families. Such “privileges” as language courses, “English-focused” schools, participation in international exchange programmes - what used to be “traditionally” a domain of the elites - have become less exclusive. In this regard, Russia’s isolation on international arena - at the level of media propaganda and a state policy, Russia, by pursuing “its unique way”, neither makes friendship with the “spiritless, decaying West”, nor holds membership in the European Union and Schengen Area, - obliges its citizens (and potential tourists as well) to apply for a visa, what acts as a powerful barrier towards an “adequate”, full-fledged mobility. European Visa, which authorizes an individual to move in and stay in a host destination, is always time-constraint and tied to a particular purpose. From the standpoint of regulations, the easiest, the fastest and the least cost-consuming way is to get a touristic visa, which is commonly valid until the departure date. Any form of a temporary residence, as I have shown in the empirical part, in the section “Prior to arrival”, requires patience, stress-resistance, reliable information sources, and lots of money. Then, who seeks to be and who could afford to be “transnationally mobile” in the Russian context?

⁷⁷ It is a commonly-spread opinion that Russia’s ascent in the 2000s was possible solely due to resource extraction and high oil prices. However, and Venezuela might serve as a vivid example, oil export alone, without other implementations, could hardly promise an increase of a life quality.

First and foremost, it refers to the Russian political elites and celebrities, who continue demonstrating their willingness to relocate to a European country, or to the USA, through a property acquisition. However, as highlighted in the second chapter, it is a context-specific middle class, born and raised in the course of the gold decade (2000-2010), that is gradually making the demand on “cosmopolitanism” and transnational mobility as well (analytichesky otchet 2014; Samson and Krasil’nikova, 2010; Zaslavskaya T.I., Yadov V.A, 2008). Post-Soviet cultural specific middle class tends to differ in terms of a preferred lifestyle, consumption patterns, and demands towards society and authorities from the two extremes, which are pictured regarding a present-day “typical Russian”: they neither play the balalaika, heavily consume vodka and keep a bear as a pet, nor do they buy up the yachts and villas at the Cote d’-Azur⁷⁸. Under a middle class representative is implied an urban-based mind job-doer (of no case belonging to the state security-service personnel), who possesses a property, including that taken on a mortgage, tends to criticize a Russia’s domestic and external political course and the personality of Vladimir Putin in particular, demonstrate a lower credibility to the institute of the Russian Orthodox church (Krawatzek and Sasse 2018). This portrait prones to overlap while regarding Russian students in Vienna. Whereas the young segment puts political issues on the back burner, students over 30-es emphasize the existing political regime as incompatible to their imaginaries of a “good, normal life”.

As evidence shows, a student visa has de-facto become the only way for the Russian middle-class households to afford an alternative life in the developed context, either for oneself, for the children, or for the whole family. My data show that educational migration from Russia to Austria is a family - facilitated enterprise to its very backbone: unlike China, South Korea and Singapur, post-Soviet Russian state has never promoted higher education abroad/overseas as a part of a national policy for the purpose of its further implementation in the interests of a native soil (Fong 2011; Hansen and Thøgersen 2015; Liu 2014).

Could be Russian students regarded as lifestyle migrants in the context of Vienna? As I demonstrate in the empirical part, students definitely share some substantial

⁷⁸ <https://arcticanthropology.org/2013/06/20/drinking-and-driving-is-so-much-fun/>

characteristics with conventional cases on lifestyle theory. Firstly, in the post-Soviet Russian context, studying “abroad”, either in a European country, or overseas, is a privilege, a unique “life-changing enterprise” (Hansen and Thøgersen 2015), what requires significant investments, which is commonly accumulated by means of property sale, and solid language skills. Then, among the incentives, driving migration, a vast spectrum of “lifestyle consideration” (Benson and O’Reilly 2009, Torkington 2010), among others climate, escape from routine, problematic relationships, work-life imbalance prevail over rational economic considerations of bettering oneself off in material respects (Arango 2000; Todaro and Smith 2006). However, a lifestyle “umbrella concept”, which I have referred to throughout the first and the second chapters of the thesis, presents lifestyle migrants who “seek to reconcile their experiences with hopes and dreams” (O’Reilly and Benson 2009) sooner in terms of constantly changing moods of affluent Western upper-and middle classes than in the least an executed enterprise, what definitely not the case of the Russian students, taking visa regulations and admission procedures into account (the section “Prior to arrival”).

As argued in the section “Migration as a family enterprise”, student visa holders from the Russian Federation are an assembly of heterogeneous groups. Both in the case of minors and youngsters, as well as middle-aged students, family plays an influencing role - either parents promote the relocation and backbone students in migration, or it is newly-fledged parents themselves who seek to provide the family and children with a better life “from the very beginning”. From this perspective, we can profitably discuss country’s student migration in the light of “transnational family” framework (Bryceson and Vuorela 2002; Bryceson 2002), what is explicitly manifested in the far-reaching relevance of global family agency in decision-making, migration behaviour and strategies of adjustment (Mincer 1978; Epstein and Gang 2004).

The second significant aspect refers to the choice of a host destination in the “sea” of the European Member States. As argued, students tend to choose the destination first, and then the institution (Mazzarol and Soutar 2002). The initial selection is made by a student/ a family. As I have shown in the section “Better life and the imaginaries of Europe”, there is a particular mental atlas which de-facto reduces potential destinations to the German-speaking area and Prague (Miroshnichenko 2018). The rest Europe is

either too expensive and student-unfriendly for a middle-class purse in terms of accommodation costs and tuition fee, or is regarded as too “local” and to some sort comparable to Russia as far as lifestyle is concerned (Slovakia, for example).

The primary criterium for choosing Vienna has been an existence of transnational links comprising of previous experiences of mobility (tourism, business trip, medical treatment), positive examples of relocation on part of relatives, friends and peers, as well as an image of Austria as a comfortable European country, offering a high quality of life, what ipso facto increases the prestige of a diploma as well (Brettel 2000; Urry 2002; Castles, de Haas, Miller 2014.). As argued, as “mediators” between a student to-be and an Austrian student visa frequently act so-termed education agencies offering against compensation a full backing, where a necessary paperwork is involved (Baas 2019). Related web-sites (the mentioned germanblog.at, the corresponding groups in social networks) stand in as a free of charge information channels, as well as a communication platform linking the present and future students. These empirical data stretch beyond a family influence towards the significance of “others”, as well as “beneficial network externalities” (Epstein and Gang 2004; Andersson 2014) in individual cross-border migration experience. As demonstrated in the section “Money matter (s): the costs of a good life”, Russian-speaking community serves among others as a large employer offering a vast spectrum of jobs, from temporary “Nebenbeschäftigung” to permanent well-paid job positions, and, consequently, to eventual permanent residence.

As argued, development discourse, i.e., the imaginaries of Europe as a better place contrasting to Russia, provokes anticipation from an upcoming departure as a rewarding and creative enterprise (Benson and O’Reilly 2009; Hansen and Thøgersen 2015): prior to arrival, hardly a student had regarded the chosen way of life in a black light. Here, it makes sense to quote my research participant who came to Vienna on a student visa with her husband and two children: *“before relocation, I hadn’t even made inquiries about an Austrian pre-school and school system; that time, it seemed natural that everything would be top-class”*.

Some students, particularly among the older and more experienced, compare their life in a homecity with a new life in Vienna similarly to the *present-absent* dichotomy of

binary opposites (fresh air/polluted air, functioning system of public transportation/an absence of it, children-friendly / hostile environment, openness/isolation etc.).

Migration is a massive upheaval, provoking transformations in the migrants' lives (O'Reilly and Benson 2009). Within the framework of a personal quest for a better life, these migrants and their families back home tend to regard the transformations in terms of personal challenges which must be overcome - in other words, they learn how to live the chosen life (Ibid.). The imagined notion of a good life in developed context, away from home (Ball and Roos 2014), is at core of a student's decision-making process, and an important constituent of his/her migration behaviour and strategies while in Vienna. The overarching "good life" broadly refers to the representation of place, i.e., Europe, as attractive, comfortable, safe, full of global perspectives within the framework of middle-class Russian families. At the same time, what is particularly implied under the mentioned "better life" is stipulated to a great extent by a student's lifecycle and previous experiences. Russian minors and youngsters understand a good life as imbued with global opportunities, travelling, exchanges, a lack of parents' control and social pressure - their group of reference is Austrian peers. How is their life organized? It is a mosaic made up of studying, frequent travels, temporary employment, participation in various student-oriented exhibitions, internships. An ideal employer is a global international organisation - an acquired transnational habitus (Darvin and Norton 2015, Kelly and Lusi 2006), moulded by the experience abroad, urges them to leave Russian-speaking migrant "communitas" (Turner 1979). Those student migrants, whose worldviews don't encompass the pursuing of global opportunities presented above, get quickly frustrated and tired of their migration experience. They feel nostalgic for the homeland and parents' patronage, as well as for a familiar language and cultural environment. These students can't make heads, which advantages a European life has and why it costs a pretty penny. As student visa regulates itself and prones to filter those not willing to study - to put it in other words, it is hardly possible to come to Vienna on a study purpose without an intention to proceed with the studies (a local register office mercilessly withdraws the visa), a failure in visa extension becomes an official reason to come back.

Student families with children, while in migration, refer to the values and a way of life, which are practiced by local middle-class families. The life in Vienna costs, and a student visa is gradually becoming in the course of a residence rather a hurdle, than a facilitator of an imagined good life. Many student migrants, especially the highly-skilled ones, found themselves in the situation of frustration and compromise as they didn't keep a privileged position and accustomed habitus within the Austrian context. Under these circumstances, although Austrian life is perceived as attractive, they long for some elements from their previous lives (Korpela 2010) and seek to restore their middle-class status by changing a student visa.

As argued in the section titled "Students' assessment of their position as third country nationals in the Austrian context", Russian students tend to overestimate the hospitality of Vienna as a host destination for student visa holders, their previous educational and professional backgrounds, and underestimate the power of a Western welfare nation-state (Geiger and Pecoud 2013). Socialized within a middle-class paradigm of an individual locus-control, they quickly realize how tiny their span of control is. In Vienna, many of them have practiced activities, which had never been experienced in Russia, or, if met, had been treated in the Russian context in terms of "normality": quasi-illegal practices (Kloosterman and Rath 2002), breaking visa regulations, enveloped wages, exploitation of their status as foreigners - the difficulties, which are commonly encountered by the "migrants" (Baas 2010). Students themselves describe it as follows - *Would you like to feel like a migrant? Try to find an employment in Vienna!*

As shown in the third section "Alliances with benefits", a link has been identified between educational migration and permanent residence, whereby a student either joins on a local workforce as a highly-skilled professional, or enters into marriage (Guličová-Grethe, M. 2004; Baas 2010). The latter refers mostly to the student females and tends to be affected by a development thought as well: a European partner is frequently regarded as an attractive "catch" by family and peers both at home, and the local Russian-speaking community. EU residence permit proves to be highly rated and serves as a legal bridge for a third country national, who has to struggle yearly with a local register office and AMS, towards a "normal", not a migrant, way of life in the developed context.

At the same time, my data reveal the incompleteness of a students' migration process - most of my research participants haven't built particular plans regarding their further residence in Vienna, preferring to live "here and now"; their quest for a better life might continue.

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URL 4:

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Appendix 1. Questions for interviewing (general framework, flexible and context dependent) ENG

1. Why Vienna?
2. Who affected your decision and financed the relocation?
3. How have you imagined your life in Vienna? To what extent has your attitude altered after the relocation?
4. Could you tell me about your study process? Do you enjoy it? Are there any challenges for you? If yes - what sort of? How do you overcome them?
5. Do Austrian education and diploma influence your plans for the future? What meaning renders this education for you / for your family?
6. Are you employed? If yes - for what purpose? How have you searched for a job? How could you describe the process of a third country student employment in the Austrian context?
7. Visa extention procedure - how could you characterize this process from a personal experience?
8. How and with whom do you spend free time?
9. How could you assess your status as a student in the Austrian context? What are the possible pros and contras? Would you like to change a student visa?
10. Could you recommend someone who has a student visa?

**Приблизительный список
вопросов для интервью RUS**

1. Почему вы решили приехать учиться в Вену?
2. Кто повлиял на ваше решение и профинансировал переезд?
3. Как вы себе представляли жизнь в Вене? какое значение имеет для вас/ваших родителей австрийский диплом? Возлагаете ли вы надежды на местное образование?
4. Работаете ли вы? если да, то с какой целью (покрытие основных расходов; хобби)? В чем, на ваш взгляд, заключаются трудности, касающиеся трудоустройства студентов из “третьих стран” в Австрийском контексте?
5. Продление визы - как ты можешь охарактеризовать процесс исходя из личного опыта?
6. Кто образует ваш круг общения? как вы проводите свободное время?
7. Как вы воспринимаете обучение в университете? что вам нравится\не нравится?

8. Насколько совпали ваши ожидания от жизни и учебы в Вене с реальностью?
9. Как вы оцениваете ваш статус в Австрии как студента?
10. Кого бы вы могли порекомендовать?

Appendix 2. Key respondents: lifepathes

Irina, 33, Russia, a single mother with a child

Start Master's Programme at linguistics in SoSe 2014 - quit in WiSe 2014-2015 - start Master's programme at MedVetUni - 2016 switching to a work permission - leaving Austria in 2017

Vladimir, 32, Russia, single 2014 start German preparatory class - 2016 start Diplom study at Law - leaving Austria in 2017

Tatyana, 33, Russian, married, 2 kids (10 and 6)

2015 start a German preparatory course - 2017/2018 WiSe start Master's programme at Business Informatics - quit - SoSe 2017 start Fachhochschule - 2018 switching over to a work permission, continue

Yulia, 35, Russia, married, two kids (8 and 3)

2017 start a German preparatory course - 2018 WiSe start Master's programme Betriebswirtschaft - switching over to work permission, continue

Tatyana, 22, Russia, single

2015 start German preparatory course - 2017 start STEOP Transcultural communication - the loss of a visa in 2017 - restore in a student status, start Fachhochschule Banking and finance

Marina, 38, Russia, a single mother with a child

2013 start a German preparatory course - 2015 start Master's programme at Biology - 2016 quit - 2017 start Fachhochschule (Krankenschwester) - 2017 leaving Austria - 2018 a new application, Lehramt (Bachelor) - 2019 marriage, a family reunification visa

