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**Labour migration, vulnerability,
and social change in Southern Caucasus:
The case of Azerbaijan**

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Abstract

Labour migration from Southern Caucasus to Russia's Far North remains under-studied whereas numerous studies were devoted to post-Soviet migration towards the main Russian cities (Moscow, Saint-Petersburg, Omsk, Novosibirsk). Migrants from Azerbaijan are numerous in Russia's Arctic cities, although in smaller numbers than in cities from central Russia. Migrations from Central Asia reflect more recent dynamics and they are more often considered in the context of post-colonial studies, in a post-Soviet logic. Nevertheless, migration flows to the industrial Far North offer a unique opportunity to study new migrants' trajectories. By focusing on migrants' professional niches, this working paper explores how migrants see their relationships to Arctic cities and to others nationalities in a special industrial environment and extreme climatic conditions.

The issue of organisational strategies of migrants in the post-Soviet era (after 1991) will be analysed while taking into account a generational dimension. This approach requires cross-validating ethnographic, temporal and spatial situations. In particular, the understanding of the spatial distribution of migrants, of occupational selection, and of temporal sequences of migrant trajectories provides useful information on their modes of functioning, and on their negotiations in the Arctic urban space. The strategies developed by migrants cross each other: they are complex and oblige the observer to study in details their biographic trajectories in order to capture their historical and social dimensions.

This analysis of polar migration gives new insights on the geography and sociology of Russian margins. It shows how work migration after the collapse of the USSR follows different logics than these prevailing during the Soviet era. They offer new alternatives to the difficult economic and political situation found in the modern state of Azerbaijan, characterised by clientelism and presidentialism.

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Introduction

The Soviet Union collapsed some 25 years ago, and with it a unique economic and social system. This collapse generated transformations in all spheres of the former Soviet societies. The reconfiguration of mobility (economic migration, environmental migration, forced displacement, exile) involved a set of new multiscale situations and migration strategies. In particular, labour migration appeared as an alternative to the disintegration of the social system and the loss of Soviet social benefits. The increasing flow of migrant workers from the Southern republics of the former USSR (Southern Caucasus and Central Asia), who left to try their luck mainly in the Russian Federation, reflects socioeconomic and political changes unprecedented in this geographical area. New labour migration patterns, temporary or circular (Mühlfried, 2014; Ivanyuk & Iontsev, 2012) emerged, especially since the late 1990s as a new paradigm for Russia (Figures 1 and 2). Mobility during Soviet times occurred in a different historical and administrative framework because of the absence of political borders between Soviet republics. A completely new situation emerged after 1991, imposing to set up a legal framework for collaboration between States and this happened in a context of major crises.¹ The countries of origin of migrants also suffered from unprecedented transformations inherent to the construction of a new social order. Furthermore, migration from the Southern Republics and the regional geopolitical situation need to be studied in the context of the crises that marked the 1990s, as well as of the current economic crisis in Russia which had so many implications. The flows of migrant workers from Southern Caucasus are generally older than those from Central Asian, which are often more recent and quantitatively important (Figures 1a and 1b). They were studied since the 2000s through various disciplines. Much research on migration in Russia offer directions and both empirical and theoretical contributions on issues as diverse as migration strategies, demographics, the impact of remittances on households, the reconfiguration of gender relations, migration of women, requalification through migration, ethnicization of economic niches, health and social risks, as well as religious issues, disenchantment and radicalisation, inter-ethnic relations, xenophobia and nationalism, and regional cooperation policies.

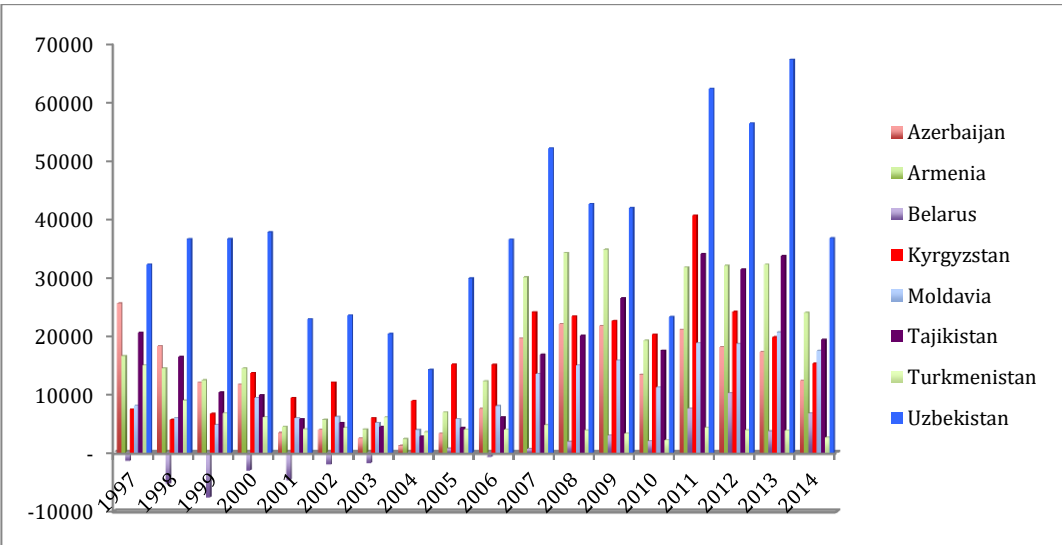
This work aims at highlighting the migration process from the Republic of Azerbaijan,

¹ In Azerbaijan, a State Migration Service modelled on the Russian FMS was established by the presidential decree of 19 March 2007. The government played an important role in stabilising its position since 2000. In 2004, the 'Concept for State Migration Policy' was adopted; and in 2013 Azerbaijan was the first CIS country adopting a 'Migration Code'. Prior to this Act, migration was regulated by a number of different legal codes. This Act, however, amalgamated all the existing laws and legal codes into one single overarching Act. The main upside of adopting a Migration code is that it simplifies the complex body of laws. As a result, it is now much easier for migrants, as well as employers to hire foreign migrants and to understand the issues on migration. The Act has also made the registration process (both for residency and employment reasons) simpler for migrants. Another change brought by the Act is that those with refugee status and successful asylum seekers are exempted from obtaining work permit, should they find an employment. The Act also provides incentives to foreign direct investors by granting 3-year stay permit for anyone investing 500,000 manats (\$322,000) into the economy. The Act was the first of its kind in the South Caucasian region. Interview with an economist from CESD in Baku.

a state rich in oil and hydrocarbons production,² and yet not fulfilling its role of social state able of ensuring social protection to its people, and to satisfy the demand of the internal job market. The issue of organisational strategies of migrants after 1991 will be analysed by taking a broad historical perspective, in order to better understand continuities as well as ruptures caused by the collapse of the USSR, and to study the networks that continue to support the migrants. The regionalisation of labour migration cannot ignore the analysis of their trajectory, nor that of their professional careers considered here from a sociological standpoint. In this respect, the study of generations of migrants will allow us to understand the geographical and temporal dimension of their trajectories, while being attentive to historical scansions that accompany them. The strategies elaborated by migrants do intersect and coincide: they are complex and require an analysis based on their migration routes, while framing available contextual data (historical, demographic and anthropological).

Figure 1a. Net migration in Russian Federation, Source: FMS database.

http://www.gks.ru/wps/wcm/connect/rosstat_main/rosstat/ru/statistics/population/demography/#



² Oil stocks are estimated at some 6 000 000 barrels; among the Republics of the former USSR Azerbaijan is the second oil producer, next to the Russian Federation.

Figure 1b. Net migration rate per 1000 persons, Azerbaijan. Source: State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

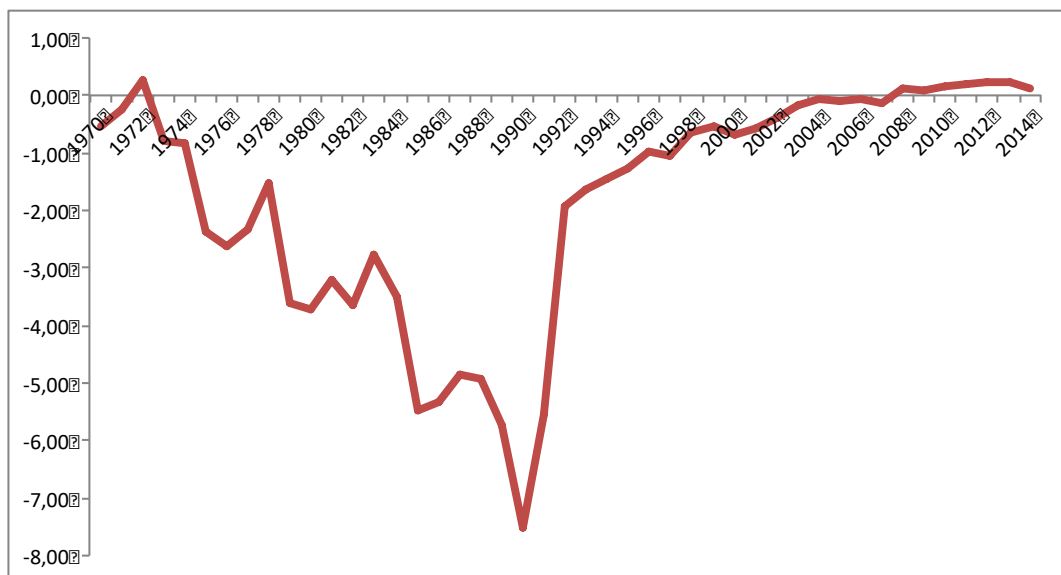
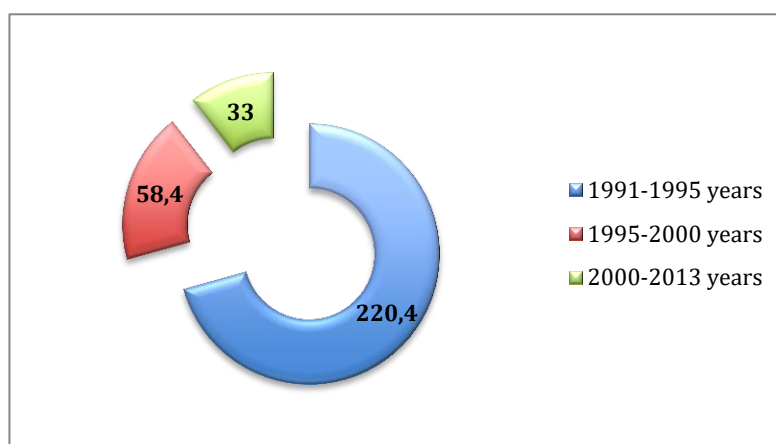


Figure 2. Number of migrants who left Azerbaijan by period (in thousands). Source: State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan.



This work is based on a series of interviews, discussions and observations in the field conducted in Azerbaijan (funded by the Cascade project) and in Russia (funded by the Cascade project and by the Norwegian Research Council, in partnership with George Washington University and the Institute of Barents (University of Tromsø) through the

ARCSUS project³ (the Arctic Research Coordination Network Project: Building a Research Network for Promoting Arctic Urban Sustainability, funded by the National Science Foundations, for 2013-2017). I carried out a first fieldwork during the summer of 2015 in the Russian North⁴ (Murmansk, Norilsk and Dudinka) which allowed me to study Azerbaijani migrant workers networks in the polar region, and also to conduct an analysis of the trajectories of migrants in a longer historical perspective in order to grasp the temporal and lattice dimensions.

Interesting results and perspectives arose from this fieldwork. For example, I found that labour migrants from Azerbaijan living in Murmansk or Norilsk were almost all coming from Massali, Lenkaran, and Lerik regions located in Southern Azerbaijan and this observation was confirmed by several interviews with scholars in Baku. I organised a second fieldwork in Murmansk in March 2016⁵ in polar conditions among the already identified labour migrants and among Azeri “first-migrants”, a wave of persons who came to the North during the Soviet times as army personnel, students, with whom I conducted in-depth interviews based on biographical methodology AGEVEN⁶ (Antoine & al., 1987; Vivier, 2006; Hohmann, 2012). I focused on polar migration and everyday life of migrants from Azerbaijan, and also studied demographic changes in the Arctic cities. I organised meetings and conducted interviews with local authorities, with migrants from Azerbaijan, with representatives of the diaspora of Azeri people who arrived during the Soviet period, with representatives of the Norilsk Nickel Consortium (I was able to visit factories in Norilsk, and mines in Talnakh and Kaierkan), and also interviewed Muslim religious authorities. I collected material on migration processes, on life histories and migrant's strategies from Azerbaijan at different periods of time. I also collected information and conducted interviews on the transformations of the labour market in the Russian Far North for a better understanding of the migration policy in arctic mono-cities. Finally, changing the perspective from the South (where I conducted work earlier) to the North allowed me to think about a new geography of ‘centers’ and ‘margins’ in the context of contemporary Russia.

We will see below how labour migration arose as an alternative to the weaknesses of social and economic policies in Azerbaijan, and became a new social norm in the face of a neo-patrimonial state. Moreover, we will highlight the true plural process of migration, and especially to question trajectories that, although they are not statistically representative, however deserve to be addressed because they have their specific history of connections with the Russian Arctic since the creation of the great Soviet polar cities. This research also helps

³ This is a multidisciplinary project which focuses on the interconnections between the development of resources, climate change, and demographic trends in major Arctic cities.

⁴ In Kola peninsula (Murmansk city, Apatity, Zapoliarnij, Nickel, Monchegorsk, Kirovsk, Teriberka) and in the Tajmir Peninsula (Norilsk and Dudinka).

⁵ I conducted this fieldwork with Aleksandra Burtseva from the MGGU, faculty of Humanities, Arctic Murmansk University.

⁶ The AGEVEN chronological grid is a simple and efficient tool. This methodology allows to date precisely events and to classify demographic events, such as changes of places of residence, changes in marital status and other life cycle events. The method is very flexible, and one could add other events such as use of healthcare, history of legal status (none, work permit), economics and politics events, natural catastrophes, legislation (chronology of changes). Beyond the ageven grid, I used a semi-structured questionnaire to record precisions in trajectories of labour migrants, strategies of families, changes of residence, life style in Russia, administrative issues, health care issues, legal status, transportation, sociability, economic niches.

thinking about the timing of migrations in a longer story and a story of margins included in the Soviet era as a continuous space with a design very different from the current boundaries.

We will highlight the periodisation of the Azerbaijani migration which will allow us to analyse their careers as a response to vulnerabilities and the desire to perpetuate a social order established and codified "here" (in Azerbaijan) while working "there" (in Russia).

1. Migration to the extreme North, and reconstruction of the socio-economic field in Azerbaijan

Labour migration: global response to vulnerabilities

Migrations from Azerbaijan, as those from other countries from Southern Caucasus, are ancient, and they intensified following the conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh (Mouradian, 1988; Papazian 2010), and the conflicts in Abkhazia and Ossetia (Merlin & Serrano, 2010; Serrano, 2007). The end of the Soviet Union led to new trajectories of migrants mainly based on the search for work.

In terms of migration flows, the Southern Caucasus countries are not at the top of the list: the Central Asian countries remain the main providers of manpower to Russia (Figures 3, 4, 5). Nevertheless, migrations from Azerbaijan are interesting to study (Dermendzhieva, 2011) and their roots in a long time period allows one to give a perspective of the several generations of migrants (Hohmann et al., 2016). Before the end of the USSR, Azerbaijanis controlled nearly 80% of the Soviet flower market, in addition to their strong presence on many other markets (Yunus, 2003). Alongside the petty trade sector, students, technicians and especially the oil sector engineers added to the other migrants. In the years 1970-1980, Hedar Aliyev increased the quota of Azeri students allowed to go study in higher education institutions (VUZ) of the USSR. However, students and engineers were obliged to enroll in the “*orgnabor*” system, aimed at organising internal migration by distributing migrants in large industrial projects of the Soviet era. This allowed the state to control their moves through the residence permit, called *propiska*⁷. Thus, thousands of young Azerbaijanis went to study in Russia at that time (Rumiancev, 2014). Trade monopolies by certain social groups is a well-known phenomenon, and is found both in the regionalisation and in the ethnicisation of markets. Then, the collapse of the USSR has upset this balance, and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict led to a huge wave of refugees, with over 800,000 internally displaced persons. Economic niches occupied by migrants have evolved over time, the markets became more segmented, and the construction sector became more attractive to economic migrants (Figures 1 and 2). The reticular dimension of migration developed during Soviet times may be

⁷ Now, the ‘*orgnabor*’ system is different because it deals only with international migration. This system involves only a few hundred people according to the FMS (Ivakhnyuk & Iontsev, 2012).

observed in the life histories of people who went through this period, and is illustrated by the path of Mourad reported below. This classic narrative should be understood as a life course ideal-typical. This kind of life course often allowed the creation of professional niches that remain, or have been transformed on bases of those already established, as in Murad's story (Box 1).

Box 1: Micro history of home economics and cross networks.

Interview conducted on January 17 2015, in Kish, Azerbaijan

Honey, tomatoes and Chechens!

Murad is a teacher, met in Kish, a small village with cobbled streets located at the foot of the Great Caucasus. He was born in Kazakhstan in 1950 during the deportation of his family. His father, who had fought on the side of the Red Army during the Second World War, was taken prisoner by the Germans and thereby declared enemy of the people by the Soviets when released by the French army in 1945. He was sent in deportation in 1947, like many others accused of collaborating with the enemy and it was not until 1953, and Stalin's death, for him to be released and allowed to return to Azerbaijan SSR with his family. Mourad was born and raised in exile for a few years in a Kazakh village (*aul*). Returning to Kish, his father went back to work for agriculture and cultivated honey, the only domestic economic resource.⁸ During deportation, a network was woven without really measuring its full dimension immediately. Murad's father has befriended a Chechen, since many Chechen people were also deported by Stalin in 1944. It appeared that this Chechen was a member of a Chechen clan, or sub-clan, of another Chechen who was a blacksmith and who had been protected by Murad's grandfather in the early 20th century. This Chechen used to work several months a year as a blacksmith for Murad's grandfather who was a Mullah. The memory being kept, links were forged between them during in the deportation period, and became even stronger because the exile context was particularly painful.

In Kish, Murad's home was big, dating back to 1928, and he explained that he actually had two houses.

He explained that at the time they could not really do work because of lack of money but mainly because lack of administrative authorisation and police control... The work took place much later, after their coming back to Kish from Kazakhstan in 1953. His father died at 85, Mourad was 53 years old. He gave all his money to his father, all his wages, "my father wanted me to stay with him and to stay until his death ... I did not want him to get remarried (his mother visibly died long ago but he did not talk about it) ... my father did not like the girls from here, nor from Baku, with black skin, but wanted a girl with blue eyes and light hair ... I did not accept".

His father was obviously a character with great authority. He was a beekeeper and Murad continued for some time this local tradition. He explained that the sale of honey production allowed to finance the marriages of his daughters (accumulation for dowry since the work of the Murad's father). Anyway, Murad insisted that honey allowed to marry his daughters well ... "They left and this is so much better," he said with a grin.

⁸ Beekeeping was already an important sector under the Safavid dynasty (Islamova, 2014).

And then later, after his studies on foreign language and an early career as a teacher, he left for his military service in Hungary (1974). After that, from 1976 to 1978 he decided, with his father, to fly to Vilnius in Lithuania to look for work (it did not give details here, but one could imagine that there was a support network). In the departure lounge (at Mineral'nye Vody) his father is recognised by the Chechen whom he had known in exile in Kazakhstan 30 years before, he recognised him too. From that moment begins the history of trade in tomatoes every summer in Lithuania, from June to August, with the Chechens.

Murad and his father made the trip every summer with the Chechens for several years, and then much later until the war. "I have forgotten my Chechen friends..., But I will go back there one day..." he said.

Murad also said that he wanted to marry his son to Chechen women because "they are strong, courageous and tough, so we need to mix genes ...".

His three daughters are married and his two sons also, and the boys are in labour migration: one has been working for 15 years in Nizhnyi Novgorod with his family, and the other goes back and forth to Buryatia where he works as a tradesman during the summer, and as construction worker during the winter.

Murad said that this was good when his eldest son sent him money.... But now, for some time, he does not send anything anymore....

Figure 3. Ethnicity of foreigners living in the Russian Federation in the last two censuses.

	2002	2010	percent increase
Azerbaijan	611,032	591,933	-3,1
Armenia	1.118,915	1.170,919	4,6
Kyrgyzstan	31,028	101,725	227,8
Tajikistan	118,691	191,637	68,3
Uzbekistan	118,691	281,161	136,9
Ukraine ⁹	2.907,584	1.912,559	-34,2

Sources: Census of the Russian Federation (2002 and 2010), Rosstat

⁹ Beyond these data, note that in 2014, the Committee of the Russian statistics recorded 115,524 departures from Ukraine, and in 2015 gks.ru statistics provide the figure of 234,460 people from Ukraine who received the asylum temporarily. According to the FMS they could be 570,000 people who received temporary asylum or a temporary residence permit.

Figure 4: Ethnicity according to Russian or foreign citizenship of the CIS countries.

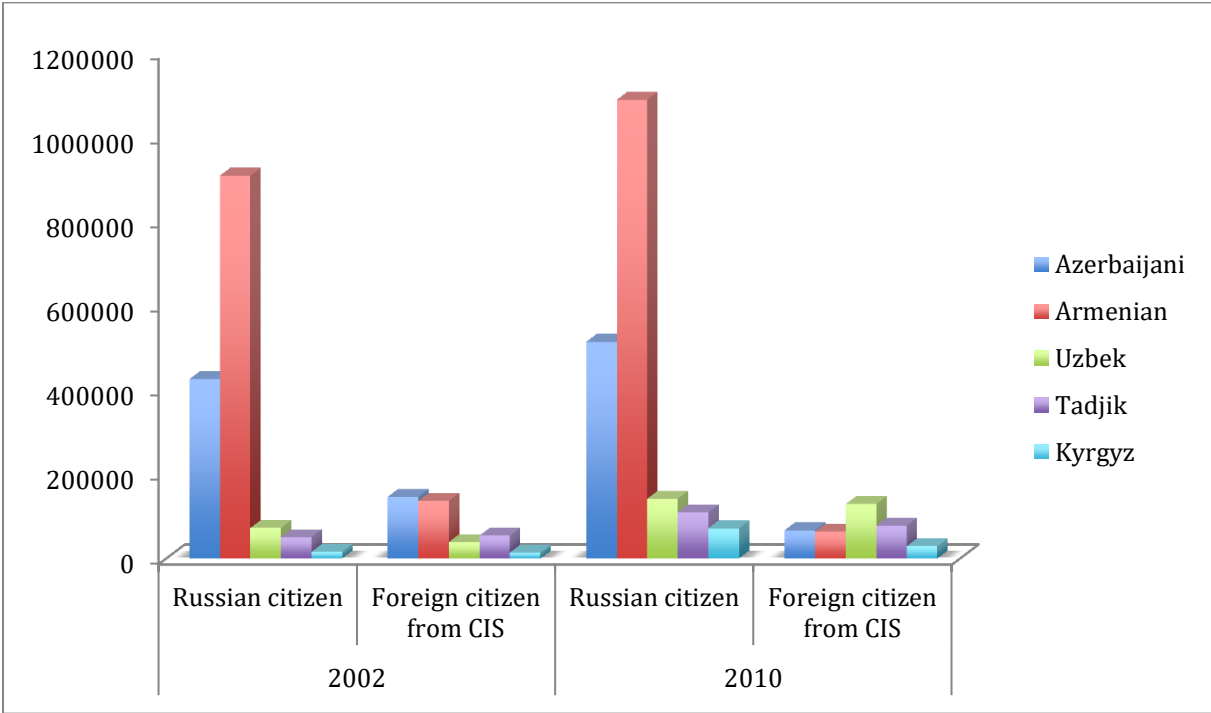


Figure 5: Foreign citizens on the territory of the Russian Federation, FMS (aggregate data)

Country of origin	May 2014	March 2016
Azerbaijan	600,096	445,575
Armenia	491,501	464,884
Kyrgyzstan	539,108	905,659
Tajikistan	1,137,939	863,426
Uzbekistan	2,509,998	1,762,364
Ukraine	1,606,186	2,501,784

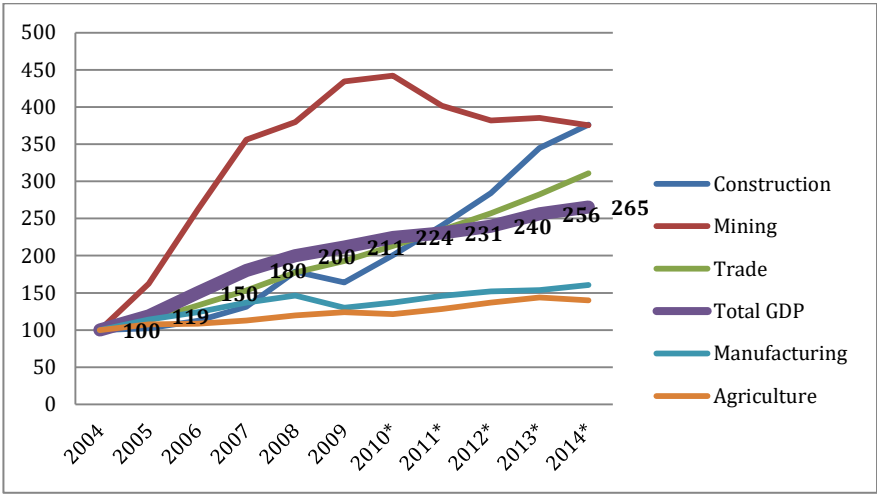
The 2003 oil boom¹⁰ enabled Azerbaijan to regain living standards, while closing the public space. This oil windfall strengthened political stability, but also authoritarianism, and economic independence after the dark years that followed the end of the USSR. The new structure of the state of Azerbaijan is characterised by neopatrimonialism - and with another dimension -the presidentialism clientelistic (Laruelle, 2012) (as some Central Asian states): it involves capturing the political and economic power and its symbols, and is reflected in

¹⁰ Note that the economic performances of Azerbaijan, with the oil boom and its projects on a large scale such as the BTC pipeline, NABUCCO and TRACECA, began to attract migrants from Russia and other destinations within the CIS but also from other countries.

particular by the predatory appropriation of resources and especially those from hydrocarbons by the clans in power, and patronage of powerful informal networks. The national economy is based almost entirely on the oil sector and therefore remains highly vulnerable to global economic shocks, and to the vagaries of global policies, which raises questions about the risks of a possible Dutch disease (Figure 6). In 2015, the oil sector accounted for 31% of the country's GDP (against 52% in 2011) and oil revenues contribute about 63% of the state budget and 86% of total exports.

Figure 6: GDP and growth of economic sectors, 2004-2014 (index 2004=100, azstat.org)

* According to SNA 2008 methodology FISIM has been distributed by users.



The social sector is now the poor relation in Azerbaijan, like in other countries of former Soviet Union. Despite increased spending in the 2000s due to a rapidly growing budget, inequalities persist because investments were ultimately low in the social sector. As elsewhere in the former USSR, although definitely at different levels, the transition from a planned economy to a market economy has not been without damage in all areas, and affected especially severely the health and social sectors. However, public spending on infrastructure, national defense and government services increased over the same period. Spending for social security decreased from 23.7% of total expenditures in 2003 to 11.6% in 2009; likewise that for education: over the 2005-2012 period, the expenditure amounted to 2.8% of GDP and these are estimated in 2016 at 2.5% of GDP (Guliyev, 2016); spending for public health was around 5% of GDP in 2016. The representations of the public health system became very negative, and this was true whatever the interviewee generation (observations and interviews since 2011 in Azerbaijan in Baku, Guba, Minguetchevir, Sheki).

Migration departures reflect a situation marked by inequalities between the general population and a small category of the population that appropriated most of the wealth for itself. As a result, inequalities remain low because living standards are poor for almost the entire population. This can be seen in the Gini coefficient, which expresses the dispersion of

the income distribution: in Azerbaijan there is a uniform distribution of poverty (Figure 7). Here, the inequalities are not visible as elsewhere, in Georgia for example: they need to be measured and understood through methods and measures other than the Gini coefficient or the HDI (Hohmann & Lefevre, 2014). The charts presented above outline this phenomenon. The national poverty level is estimated at 15% for Azerbaijan (national line), while the proportion of very poor (earning less than \$ 1.25 / day), according to UNDP, amounted to less than 0.5% (Figure 8). In Georgia these rates are 55% and 18% respectively.

Figure 7. Gini coefficient 2003-2012, (source: UNDP)

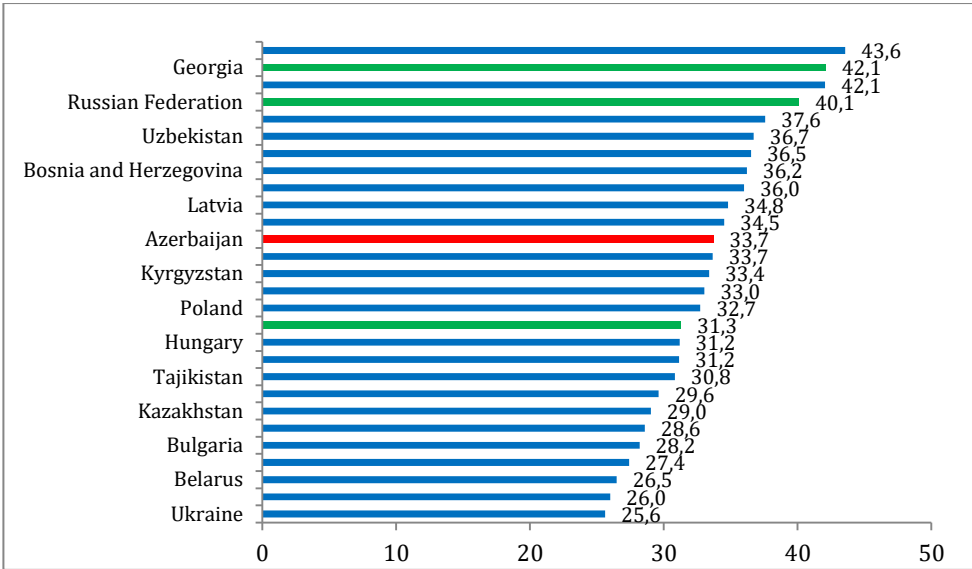
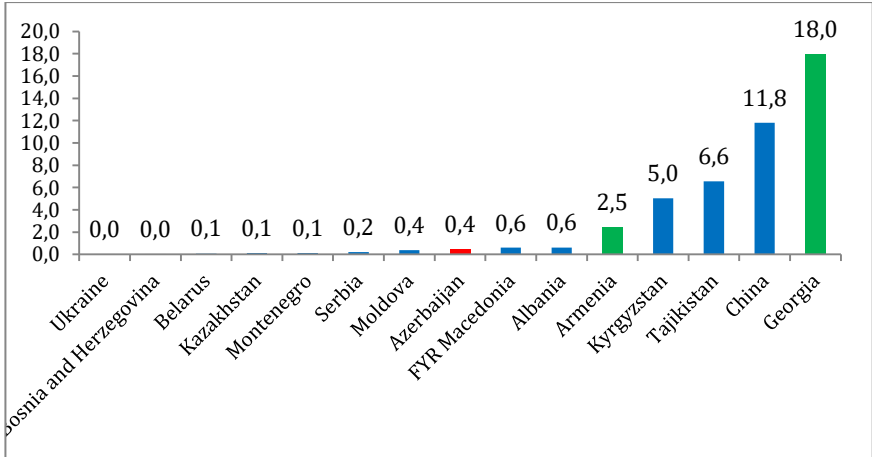


Figure 8. Population below income poverty line, (% PPP-USD < 1.25 a day, 2002-2012)
(source: HDI UNDP)



A new law ¹¹ of the Russian Federation came into force on January 1, 2015 for migrant workers. It stipulates the obligation to buy a license, and other obligations such as to pass an exam on Russian language and civilisation: this will certainly not hinder informal work and risks even to exacerbate it. Moreover, the fall in oil prices and the depreciation of the ruble (estimated at 80% according to the CESD - Center for Economic and Social Development- early 2015, interview in January 2015, Baku) led to a very negative situation in the labour market, including a pause in- or a definitive abandon of- major construction projects. Drastic cuts were made in the energy sector by British Petroleum (B.P.) in early 2016 (Guliyev, 2016). However, the proportion of employees in this sector represents only 1% of the Azerbaijani labor force. In Azerbaijan, although the authorities maintained the parity of the local currency (*manat*) to the dollar, the crisis threatens the country's economy and budget based on a barrel at full price. The year 2015 is the first year that Azerbaijan registers a low debt to 8.6% of GDP, which will rise to 19.8% in 2016 (Ahmadov, 2016). The budget of SOCAR (State Oil Company of the Azerbaijan Republic) was reduced, and many investment projects have been frozen since the beginning of the crisis. However, the decline in reserves of the Azerbaijani Central Bank was partially offset by injecting liquidity through the SOFAZ (State Oil Fund of the Republic of Azerbaijan) a sovereign Wealth Fund), and the budget was revised upwards for 2016. The SOFAZ plays a key role in fiscal policy in the country and guarantees some form of stability, but the dominance of SOFAZ as a savings fund and extra-budgetary stabilization commodity jeopardizes long-term fiscal sustainability (Aslanli, 2016)

Above all, the devaluation of the *manat* was felt by farmers and local traders, but also on household consumption, loan applications, not to mention the domino effects already felt on buildings and housing construction. Moreover, transfers from Russia decreased significantly which also affected the domestic economy.

In addition, the crisis in Russia is reflected in particular by a tendency to returns of Azerbaijani migrant workers, which may generate tensions in the Azerbaijani labour market. Since January 2015, over 70,000 migrants returned home according to official data, and according to unofficial sources (CESD) the numbers could be much higher. "Why currently stay in Russia for work, when the ruble has fallen so much; so, it's no longer profitable for us ..." (Migrant Azeri from Sheki, 50). Nevertheless, others are remaining, and we will analyze the careers and trajectories of migrants from Azerbaijan in the Russian Great North, in the region of Murmansk, in Tajmir peninsula, in Norilsk and in Dudinka, to shed light on their original routes, characterised by an historical anchor, accompanied by geographic and professional logics, on which it should spend time.

¹¹ Federal law of November 24, 2014, No. 357-FZ, entitled : "On amendments to the Federal Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners in the territory of the Russian Federation and other legislative acts of the Russian Federation".

2. Topography and temporality of migration to the Murmansk region

The history of settlement in the Murmansk region is much older than that of Norilsk. The Norilsk-Nickel combinat was created from scratch in 1935 by the prisoners (*zeks*) from Norillag, before Norilsk acquired city status in 1953. The Murmansk region nevertheless followed the development of the same industries as Norilsk: extraction of minerals (such as nickel, copper, apatit, palladium, platinum) and other semi-precious and precious minerals, as well as hydrocarbons. It also included a strong fishing sector, which ranked second in Russia: Murmansk was one of the most important Russian ports in the 1950s. The story of the conquest (*osvoenie*) of this Northern region demonstrates significant intermingling of populations mingled with the indigenous Saami, whose presence is attested in this area for over 10,000 years, and from the seventeenth century with early Russian settlers: the Pomoris. In particular, the construction of the railway in 1916 required a large workforce, and Murmansk soon became a typical product of Soviet industrialization, with its industry, its port, and its military bases. The industrial complexes (*Kombinats*) developed with the first five-year plans, and most monocities (*monogorod*)¹², go back to the early 1930s. A city is considered as monocity when 25 percent of its population works in its primary (*gradoobrazuyushchii*) industry, more than 50 percent of total town production is generated by this industry, and more than 20 percent of the municipal budget is dependent on it (Didyk, 2014; Laruelle, Hohmann, Burtseva, 2016). All kinds of people have been working in this region, originally hostile to mankind: the *spetspereselentsy* (mostly Kulaks), the Gulag prisoners (approximately 10,000 persons in the 1930s), but also volunteers. The massive industrialisation and the destruction of the peasantry in Central Russia have led many people to migrate to the Kola Peninsula. The "canadisation" (*kanadizaciâ*)¹³ did not take place in this region contrary, to the expectations of the authorities in the early 1920s (Fedorov, 2009). A proactive strategy was adopted and was characterised, among other things, by the establishment in 1932¹⁴ of polar allowances (*Severnye nadbavki*) which contributed to the installation on longer periods of these populations (Fedorov, 2014). Moreover, the strategic impact of the presence in Murmansk of the Northern Fleet and of the central government in charge of developing the northern road to the Arctic participated in the industrial and strategic conquest of the North, as new frontier with strong resonances in the mental universe of the population which led to a demographic boom: the city grew from 11,400 inhabitants in 1928 to 117,000 in 1939 (Fedorov, 2004, p. 259). Completely destroyed and devastated during the Second World War, its industry rose again after the war, and new waves of migrants helped rebuilding the city: they found work in the industrial complexes, in the mines. Murmansk became the largest city located beyond the Arctic Circle, with 472,274 inhabitants at the 1989

¹² The eight monocities of the Murmansk regions are Kirovsk, Kovdor, Zapoliarni Zori, Monchegorsk, Tumannyi, Zapoliarnyi, Revda, Nikel.

¹³ Since 1922, port activities and the first fishing industries have emerged. During this decade, the authorities expected a "natural" evolution of the region, they referred to as "Canadianisation" referring to the model of Canadian development. However, this policy quickly failed, the region was not attractive, was characterised by a large turnover of people not wanting to stay and consequently a low potential for the creation of a labour force.

¹⁴ [//www.glavbukh.ru/art/21107-kak-schitat-otpusknye-rabotnikam-severyanam#ixzz3gPxHd7Xg](http://www.glavbukh.ru/art/21107-kak-schitat-otpusknye-rabotnikam-severyanam#ixzz3gPxHd7Xg)

census. Several waves of migrants occurred in the 1960s and in 1970-1980, often with this romantic idea of contributing to the continuity of the "conquest" of the pioneer's fronts of the polar areas, earlier inaccessible to socialist prosperity, and with the willingness to take a masterful challenge¹⁵ of making the city an utopia. The 1970s were a golden age period: it was very prestigious to work in the North, and for that it was imperative to have an invitation and two letters of recommendation. It explains partly the high rate of out-migration in this period even though the stagnation (*zastoi*) era was already opened until the perestroika. After this period, mobility does express in the same way, even in the North. The system was already disintegrating since the Brezhnev years, by containment of economic reform, the war in Afghanistan, the development of an informal economy: the aporia of this period was affected as under Gorbachev¹⁶, and led to deteriorating living standards and hopes too. Moshe Lewin expresses this very well in his famous phrase "the paradoxical nostalgia for the Brezhnev period was due to a mirage and not a miracle"(Lewin, 2003 : 459).

New Frontiers, ancient migrations and reshaping of the urban landscape

After the end of the USSR, the liberalisation of prices in February 1992 (Heleniak, 1999) accompanying the shock therapy policy, had lasting effects on the economy and the social and economic history of this polar region. The decentralization of the federal budget to the regions has swung very quickly the economies of the entire region and especially the monocities (Dydyk, 2014), which were very dependent, by definition, on the funds provided by a planned economic. This will lead to massive depopulation in the far North (Heleniak, 1999). Indeed, why staying and working in areas hostile to humans without further financial and social compensations? The return of populations on the continental homeland, "*na materike*", was combined with the process of "westward drift" that was observed in Russia after the fall of the USSR. This resulted in an increase of the average age of the population in the Great North: the young work-age population was gone, leaving room for an aging population (Mkrttchian, 2005). Between 1991 and 2012, the Murmansk region has lost a third of its inhabitants (Bardileva, Portsel, 2014). This demographic situation has transformed the urban world and its industrial landscape, and generated a reconfiguration of professional solidarity and social fabric¹⁷. For instance, Norilsk lost 35% of its population compared with the last Soviet census of, 1989¹⁸, and it is the migration flows which reconfigured the demographic dynamics in the 1990s and 2000s. Populations of young migrants, who came alone or with their families, changed the age structure of Norilsk population, reflecting a younger population, since most migrants have not had time to grow old (Kašnitskij, 2014). The most salient example is the autonomous district of Yamalo-Nenets, where there has been

¹⁵ Interview conducted with Oleg Kovas, Human Resources at Norilsk-Nickel, Zapolyarnyi-Nikel complex, July 14, 2015.

¹⁶ Gorbachev developed command methods that then required increasingly large investments in technology in the arms race against the West. The disintegration of the Soviet system is the result of interactions inherent to the system of economic policies, but also of pressure on society and of high centralisation, without forgetting the conditions dictated by the domestic and international environment.

¹⁷ This was due to a low birth rate and a low life expectancy, lower than elsewhere: 63 years for men and 74 years for women.

¹⁸ Yet, compared to other Arctic regions like Chukotka and Yakutia (Heleniak, 1999), it remains relatively untouched.

a population growth generated by the influx of migrants, who settled with their families, and have higher fertility than the average for Russia and that of the Nenets.

These big circumpolar cities have witnessed an intensifying flow of migrant workers from former Southern Soviet republics, predominantly rural, of Central Asia and South Caucasus, in the late 1990s, which accelerated in the 2000s (Hohmann & al., 2014; Dermendzhieva, 2011). The Arctic region became an economically attractive region for these people without prospects, or plagued by uncertain political situations. However, this attraction did not occur by chance, and territorial and economic anchor of Azerbaijanis (among others nationalities, see Figures 9 and 10) attests to the reticularity, allowing the development or the current recomposition of different professional niches.

Figure 9. Number of Azerbaijani inhabitants in different regions of Russia according to censuses (Rosstat).

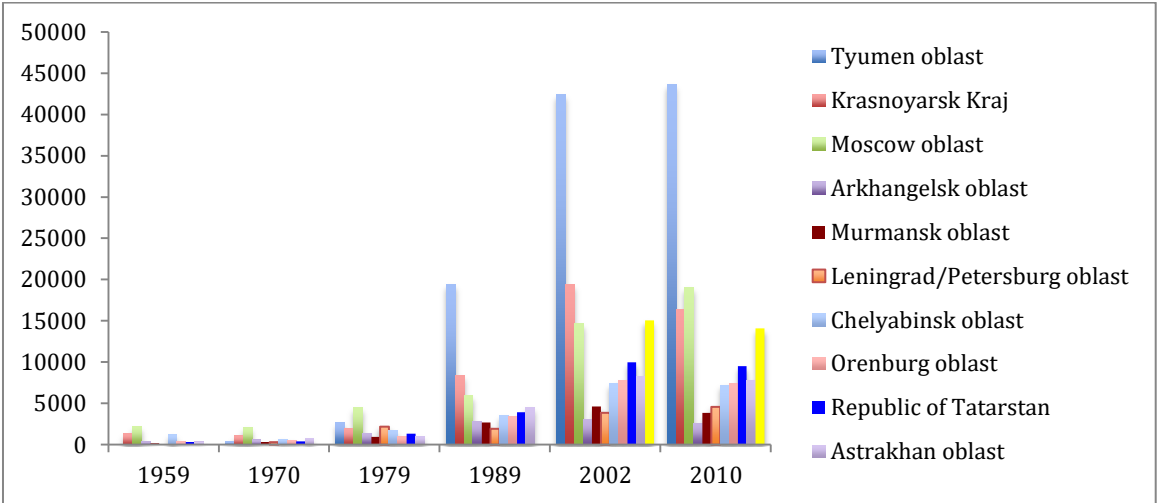


Figure 10. Ethnic distribution in selected regions of Russia,
sources: Rosstat, census of 1989, 2002, 2010.

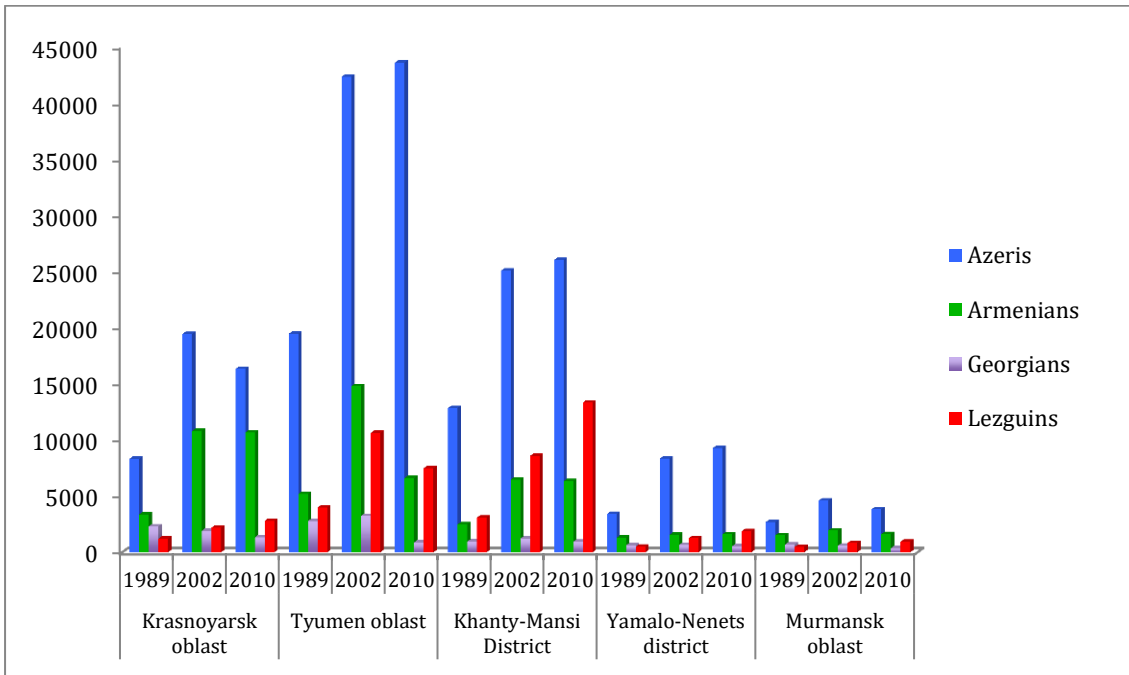
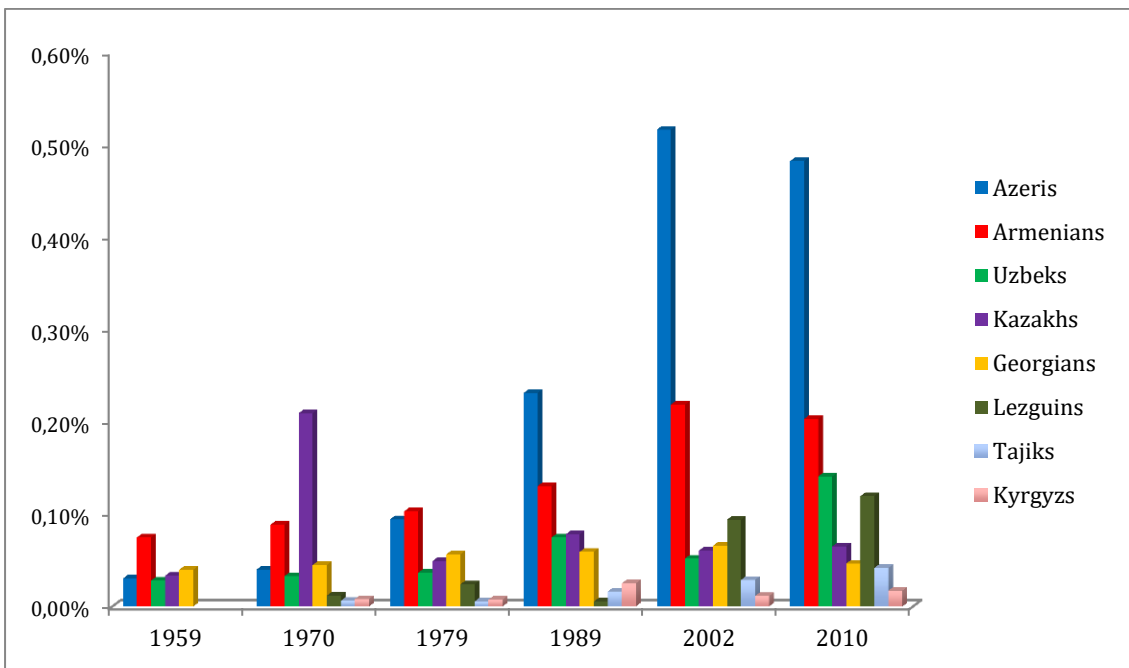


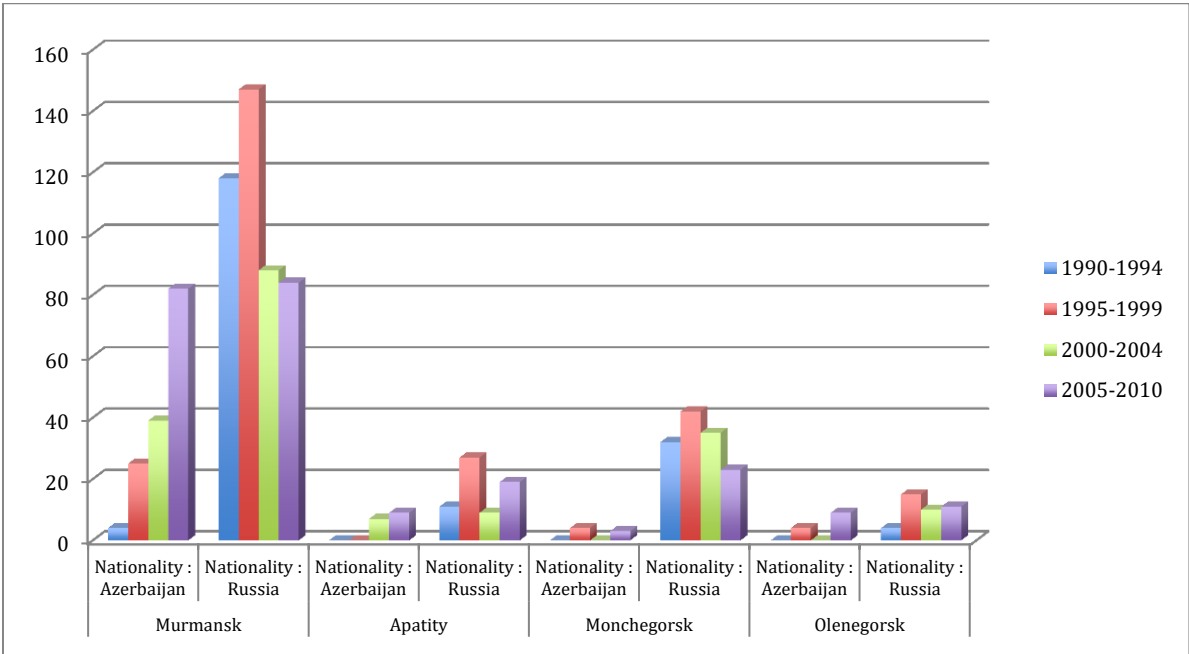
Figure 11. Ethnic groups from Caucasus and Central Asia in Murmansk oblast,
sources: Rosstat for all census



Territorialisation of plural economic niches and generational trajectories

Despite this very unfavourable situation, there was no perforation of the urban space, and no district was massively deserted in the Murmansk region. Besides the key areas related to mining of minerals, Murmansk saved some diversification, that mono-cities could not do, by definition. On finds there: food industries, services, transport companies and logistics necessitated by the proximity to the port and to the railway, as well as the presence of the administration of the region and the municipality. Also, the presence of a large military contingent¹⁹ in this traditionally highly militarised region helped maintaining the operation of the local markets. Meanwhile, the number of students has fallen seriously (Fedorov, 2004), since students are now more attracted by universities in Central Russia. In addition, the failure of the huge development project of the Shtokman gas field resulted from a disagreement between Gazprom and Statoil²⁰, and completely challenged the promises, at least for the time being, of major developments in energy in the Barents Sea, which could have created new areas of activity in the region. Finally, the Northern Fleet employs about 30,000 people, and is rapidly modernising after twenty years lost since the 1990. Russia put on a total renewal of its fleet within 30 years, so that it could become the most powerful fleet in the world, parallel with the development of Arctic brigades of rescue and protection of economic interests of the country, including the fight against terrorism, the protection of oil and gas resources, platforms and tankers traffic. This sector is obviously set to become an employer in its own right (Laruelle, 2014).

Figure 12. Distribution of Azerbaijani inhabitants, by cohort (year of move) and nationality (Russian or Azerbaijani); source Rosstat.

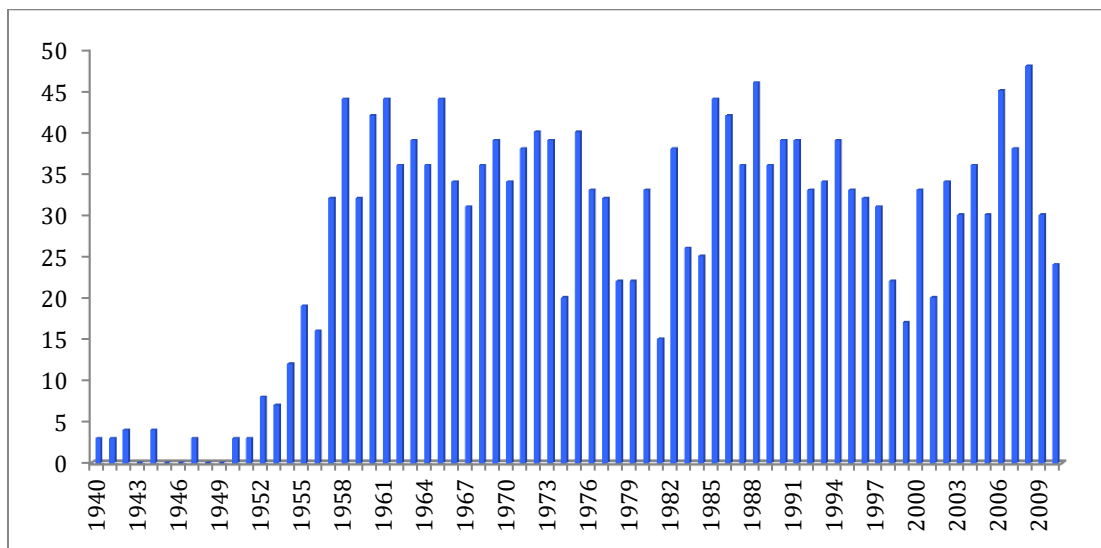


¹⁹ In total, about 130 000 people live in these military towns, called ‘closed territorial entities’. (Revich & al., 2014).

²⁰ “Too expensive: Gazprom puts Shtokman on hold,” *Russia Today*, August 29, 2012, <https://www.rt.com/business/shtokman-gas-gazprom-857/>

The history of mobility in the Murmansk region, and also in the more recent city of Norilsk (1953), that we briefly discuss to advance this work, is interesting for several reasons. It provides information on population structures, on social stratification, on the transformation of the migration landscape according to historical and socio-economic processes. It also demonstrates collective journeys among migrants from different countries of the former Soviet space. These itineraries can be analysed through the prism of sociological career (Becker, 1985) but also through the generational prism. This approach allows one to decipher the transformations over time, beyond networks and professional sectors concerned, and to take into account the motivations and constraints of individuals who moved. Indeed, the different "generations" of migrants (under its ideal-typical meaning), can reveal the characteristics of their own²¹. These generations speak for themselves and are to grasp through their modes of functioning, the disruption of the established social order, and the socio-historical processes. This reading grid can address the issue of migration under a generational angle by taking the generation as a group of migrants (in this case immigrants) who belong to the same generation mode.

Figure 13: Year of birth of Azerbaijani inhabitants in Murmansk city (Census 2010)



Social processes being extremely fluctuant, new paradigms emerged with the collapse of the USSR. Some nationalities from countries south of the former USSR will arrive in exponential numbers in the Murmansk region, and also in Norilsk, in order to find work, in the late 1980s when the local population started to record a notable deficit, that will continue to widen in the years 1990-2000. However, it is important to emphasise here that the flow of

²¹ Bourdieu and Sayad showed similar effects when analyzing generations of Algerian migrants in France (Bourdieu & Sayad, 1974 et 1999).

migrants from the South Caucasus, as those from Central Asia, can be linked clearly to the mobility experiences during Soviet times. These earlier experiences are also used as a bridge for compatriots and family, and allow one to identify the establishment of professional niches around nationalities. Considering these processes from a sociological angle of the career trajectories, two broad categories can be identified from these 'newcomers' migrants: military service and work.

Migration for military service

The Murmansk region is one of the most militarised regions of Russia, and it hosts several military bases in closed cities, or ZATO (Aleksandrovsk, Severomorsk, Olenegorsk, Zaozersk, Ostrovnoj, Vidjaevo) where the Northern fleet is concentrated. The need for service men on the bases, as well as in the Northern fleet, represent a significant niche for migrants. Among the interviewed persons from Azeri origin²², many were born in the 1950-1960-1970 years, and were sent in the Murmansk region to do their military service²³. Many Armenians were also in this case, in particular those who were studying at the Baku naval military school before the end of the 1980s. There was also a high prestige associated with work in the Northern Fleet for those who were admitted. Some stayed later as contract workers, others found work in another sphere and remained as Reza²⁴, a person born in 1950 in the region of Astara. Reza was a Talysh, even if he explains to have declared himself Azerbaijani in the last Russian census of 2010:

"... All that did not exist before the collapse of the USSR; at the time there was no Talysh or Azeri, it was the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics ... I feel above all a Soviet citizen even if all this is over ... I came here in Murmansk to do my military service in 1972, I was sent to Severomorsk (a closed city), I served in the Fleet of submariners and then I joined in the Fleet as a contract worker (*po kontraktu*) before entering the security forces of the MVD, the Ministry of Interior in Murmansk in 1990 ... I cannot stand the cold, I've never been able to bear it, but I prefer to stay in the North even though I love my country of origin... it's too hard there, and here we are family, three of my four children are here in the area and they have a job, my youngest daughter is in 5th grade and works well in school, that's what counts ... "(Interview in Murmansk, March 2016).

The army allows one to acquire social status (Jones, 1990), to build social networks and for those who decided to do their military service in Murmansk after 1991 it was a way to get Russian citizenship. Azeris did not necessarily intend to stay after their military service,

²² Interviews on the markets (*ovoshnye bazy*) in Murmansk in July 2015 and March 2016 with the Azerbaijani diaspora in restaurants and during the festival of Nowruz (Iranian New Year on 21th of March) in Murmansk.

²³ In the words of French General, a former military attaché in Moscow, the use of "Soviet contingent" has varied greatly during the Soviet era, from the non-inclusion of the "national question" up to the domination of this issue. The turning point was during the "Brezhnev years," around 1970, when the Republics executives were gradually infiltrated by the representatives of the dominant ethnic group (Azeri in Azerbaijan, Uzbeks in Uzbekistan). The war in Afghanistan (1979-1988) upset the quota allocation. The initial forces who entered Afghanistan came from the 40th Army of the RM of Turkestan, with a high proportion of Central Asians and Caucasians. Moreover, construction battalions were also a parameter to consider in explaining the distribution of conscripts (interview with a French General who was stationed in Moscow, October 15, 2015).

²⁴ For ensuring anonymity, identities were changed.

but the socio-political context of the late 1980s and early 1990s for those who had completed their military service (generation born in the years 1960-1970) in the USSR and Azerbaijan SSR encouraged them to remain in the North. The intentionality is therefore to be questioned through various exogenous parameters, and not only the endogenous ones. The same phenomenon was observed in Norilsk (Figures 14, 15 and 17): there is no chance in professional mobility, and military service could be one of the starting points for a career in a city or mono-city of the North. Likewise, having studied at an institute specialising in metallurgy or mining was also an important reason, as we shall see below.

Figure 14: Nationalities from Southern Caucasus and Central Asia in Norilsk and its satellites (Census 2010).

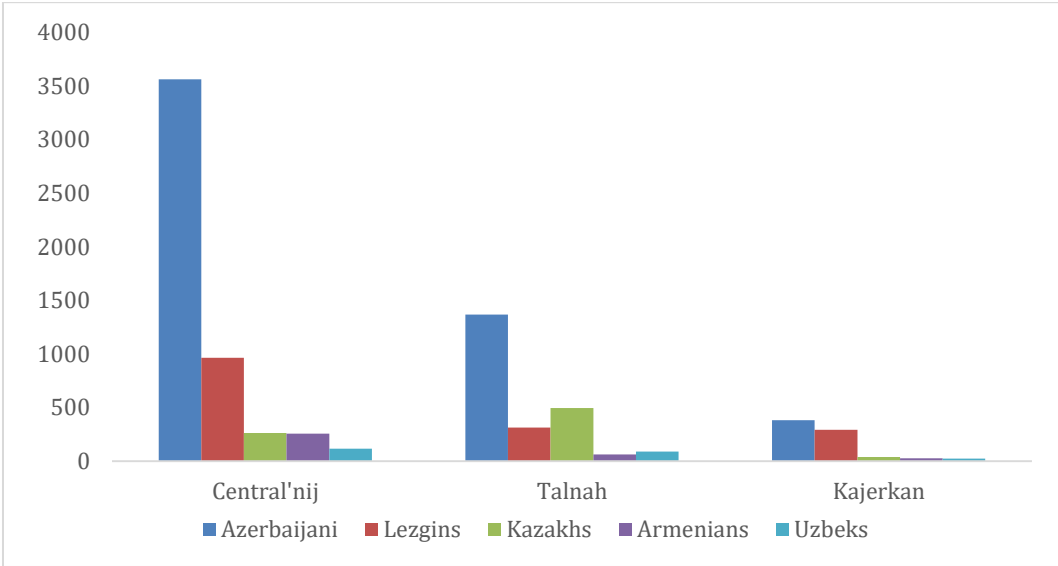
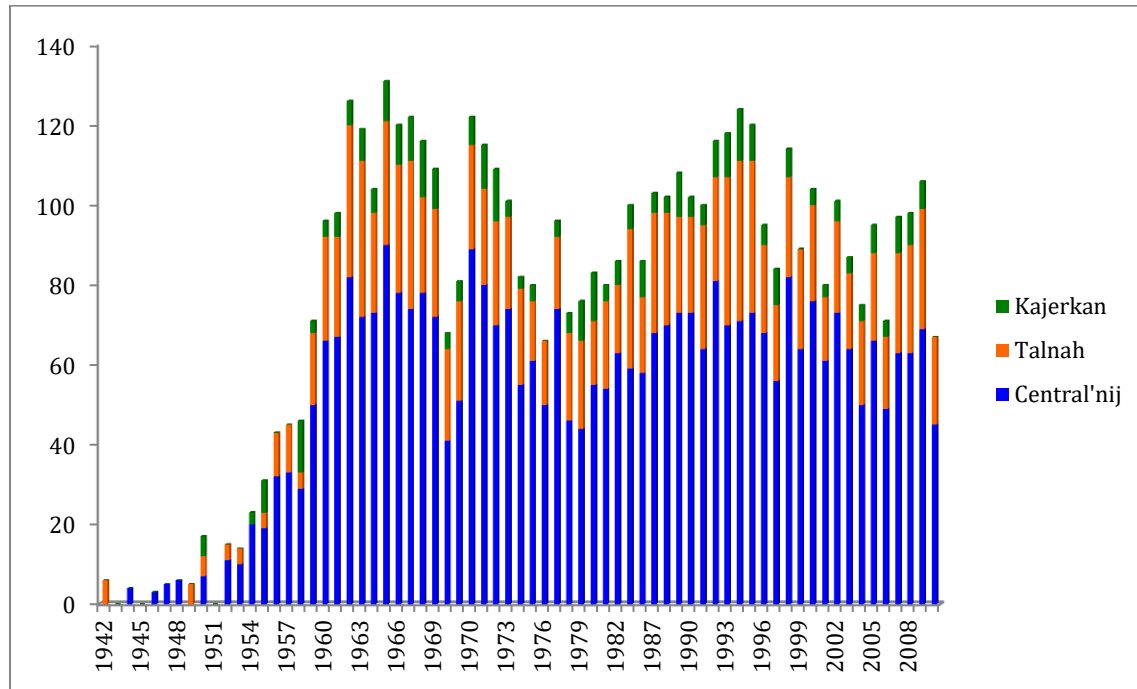


Figure 15: Year of birth of Azerbaijani inhabitants in Norilsk and its satellites (Census 2010)



Migration for work: territoriality and social ties

Migration for work is at the heart of the conquest of the Great Russian North, and area for which mental representations of a frontier are marked. The industrial conquest of the Murmansk region started with a labor force essentially of Slavic origin. After the Second World War and the huge need for reconstruction, there was an influx of Ukrainians and Belarussians, who are now the two largest nationalities after the Russians in the Murmansk region. These nationalities found quickly a professional niche in the extractive industries characterizing the Murmansk region. Job opportunities were not lacking in the 1950s, and then Komsomol characterised an intense relation to industrial development in these pioneer areas hostile to man. Many Ukrainians who worked as miners in the Donbass or who trained in specialised institutions in metallurgy stayed to work in the North. In addition, financial incentives, such as the specific subsidies in the North (*Severnye nadbavki* or "*poliarki*") were introduced in 1932 and represented significant financial incentives, as well as the "nordicity coefficients" introduced in the 1960s, which increased salaries according to remoteness (this incentive also concerned the East and the South of Russia, such as the Chita region) since nordicity expresses the distance from the center, as well as various social benefits, such as a 21-days paid leave by the company .

Figure 16: Level of education level among Azerbaijani inhabitants of Murmansk city (Census 2010).

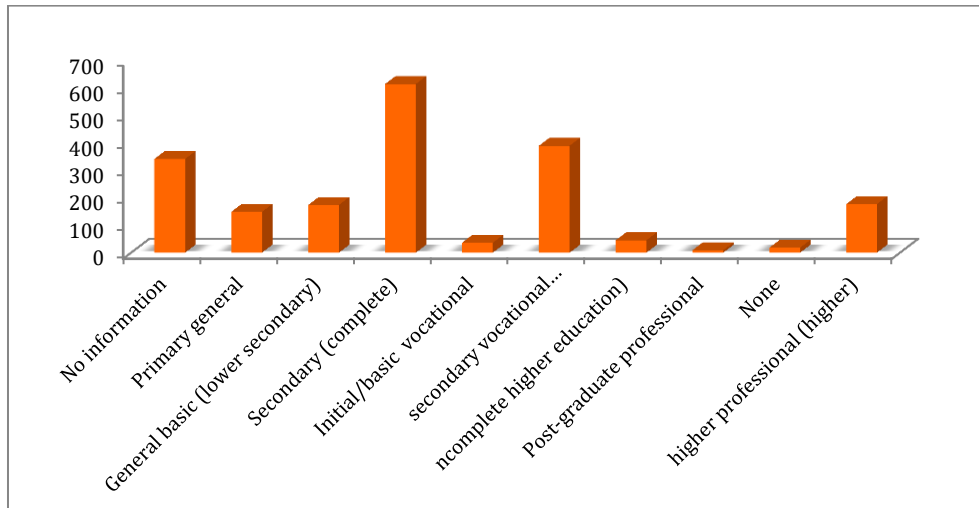
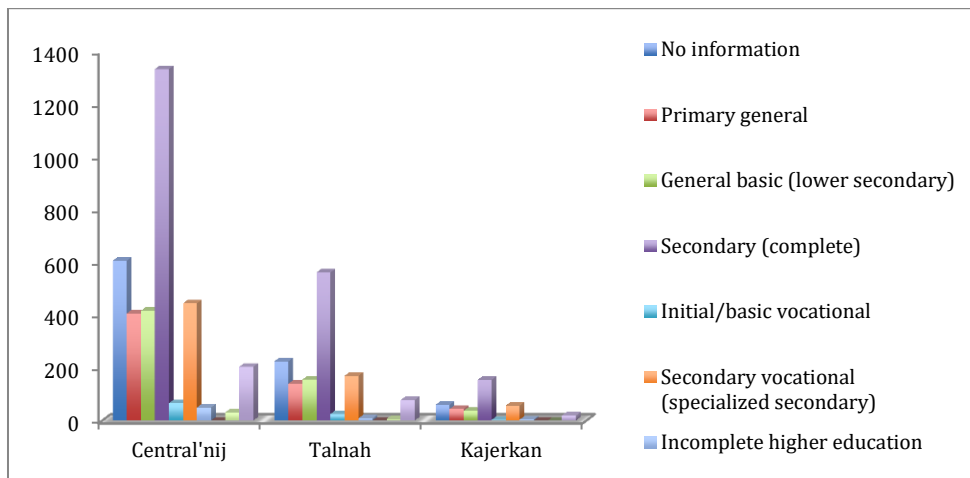


Figure 17: Level of education among Azerbaijani inhabitants in Norilsk and its satellites (Census 2010).



The South Caucasus nationalities (Armenians and Azerbaijanis especially) have a long tradition of mobility in Russia including in the North (as *neftianiki*, engineers²⁵, geologists, experts, students, traders, fish plants, ports). In Azerbaijan, one of the main reasons for a high rate of out-migration to Russia was the dire economic conditions and food provision of population in rural areas in late 1960s. Seeking better life, many people began to leave Azerbaijan for Russia in large numbers. Thus, the difference between immigration and out-

²⁵ Azerbaijan developed an expertise in the specialised sector of oil extraction from the late 19th century, Kazakhstan did so later; students and engineers followed the same trajectory during these years of construction, commissioning resource development.

migration for Azerbaijan reached -26,000 people by mid 1980s, a fourfold increase in comparison to 1970. Since the majority of migrants were young people, it created a demographic problem in Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijanis²⁶ are the first nationality of the country's post-Soviet South in the Murmansk region, as in the other Polar Regions (see Figures 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15) and remain very active. Many migrants came temporarily as part of seasonal migration for a few months to sell their products, or as those who found themselves on major construction projects in the 1980s, such as the famous *stroiotriadi*, or as those who played and continue to play a cardinal role in the organisation and consolidation of post-Soviet migration strategies and elsewhere in Russia (Rahmonova-Schwarz, 2010, Sahadeo, 2012).

The end of the USSR transformed the economic relationships, and mobility patterns were reconfigured. Nevertheless, the economic niches, even if they changed after 1991, were marked by a long history and an "ethnicisation" of economic sectors. Azerbaijanis who once sold fruit and vegetables on the market or in small shops became managers or directors of entire supermarket chains (like the Evroros chain in the Kola Peninsula) or took control of wholesale markets and became major entrepreneurs (observations in the summer of 2015 and the winter of 2016 in Murmansk, and the summer of 2015 in Norilsk and Dudinka). A new "aristocracy" was born, which covers the generations of Azerbaijanis arrived before the end of the USSR and those aggregated to the niches developed during the Soviet era. Moreover, niches became more pluri-ethnic, establishing new relationships of trust with other "nationalities", such as Uzbeks and Tajiks because "they do not drink and they work well" (interviews with Azerbaijanis in Murmansk). At the last Russian census of 2010, Azerbaijani nationals constituted 42% of all Southern nationalities of the former Soviet Union in the Murmansk region; Armenians 18%, and Uzbeks 12% (about 7,000 Uzbeks with or without residence permit according to the AZIA association, helping to build networks²⁷).

Embedded reticular Migration

Prioritisation of ethnic niches, in addition to their regionalisation, is a reality that reflects the economic but also social and cultural issues. In Murmansk, Azerbaijanis traditionally working in fruit and vegetables wholesale markets are mainly from the southern regions of Azerbaijan (Massali, Astara and Lenkaran²⁸). Even in Soviet times, Azeri traders in Russia were from these regions, but also from the North East of Azerbaijan (Gusar, Khachmaz, mainly populated by Lezgins) because of an ancestral know-how in this business. The collapse of the agricultural economy, the disappearance of collective and state farms hit

²⁶ In the late 2010s, there are an estimated one million workers from Azerbaijan in the Russian Federation (source: IOM), and 60% of remittances would be for families living in rural Azerbaijan (source: FAO).

²⁷ Interview with the representative in July 2015 in Murmansk.

²⁸ Note here that the Massali region, mainly populated by Talysh, is a poor area and despised by the political power and the Aliiev clan. On Azeri migration, see: Yunusov, 2003.

very hardly the rural market gardens, including many compatriots now found in Murmansk. It was in the 1990s, on the ruins of the USSR, that developed commercial migrations back and forth, called “shuttle” (*čelnok*), as a survival strategy. These migrations, typical of the early post-Soviet period, helped building networks that would establish the current professional niches in the field of business.

Moreover, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict resulted in flows of Azeri migrants to Russia in general and to the North in particular, in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The lack of living space for the internally displaced Azerbaijani (which still account in 2016 for 6% of the total population of Azerbaijan) led them to find better living conditions beyond the borders of their country. Many Azerbaijani people who lived in the border provinces of Karabagh, for example in the Agdam region, a completely devastated region, left their homes. Nowadays, Azerbaijanis from Agdam region are found in Murmansk, working on clothing markets. Markets became more segmented after the disappearance of the Soviet Union, but economic niches they represent maintained themselves, based on an ancient and solid reputation of Azerbaijanis in this sector. In the service sector, some became heads of shopping centers, such as the Evroros²⁹ malls, whose general manager is an Azerbaijani who received medical training in Baku and was "reclassified" in the business. Restaurants and cafes are also attractive niches they occupy much. This network of shopping centers is very dynamic, and protected by different networks that overlap more or less formally (personal observations in the field). Finally, one also finds students³⁰, specialised in engineering or in other areas popular with industrial complexes, such as mineral extraction for example, prolonging somehow an established tradition during Soviet times.

Role of diaspora associations in the reconstruction of social networks

The strategies implemented by the post-Soviet Azeri migrants to access the labor market are favored by the fact that the diaspora is particularly well established in Murmansk since Soviet times. Afil Guseinov³¹ is the head of the Azerbaijani diaspora in the Murmansk region through its representative function of the branch of the “*Vserossijskij Azerbajdžanskij Kongress*” (VAK) for the Mourmansk region³². Afil appears as the ideal type of the second

²⁹ The Murmansk region has about a hundred Evroros shopping centers, employing some 9,000 people.

³⁰ It is also noteworthy that in Soviet times, the compulsory allocation process (*raspredelenie*) of the labor force meant that one had to serve the state for five years after the studies, which were paid by the state.

³¹ Interview with Afil Guseinov, July 9, 2015 in Murmansk.

³² VAK was founded on March 5, 2001, and its first congress was held in Moscow on October 4, 2001. Murmansk branch of the VAK was founded in 2004 but actually worked only since 2008 according to Afil. There are other subsidiaries in Russia and the VAK plays an important role in the administrative regulation from the Diaspora working with local authorities, the FMS and the FSB, and is responsible for the adaptation of management local culture, Russian language exams, and also coordination with the national associations and organizations.

generation of Azeris arrived in Russia. Afil was born in 1966 in Nakhichevan³³, and was called for military service in the Murmansk region in 1983 where he returned after studying law elsewhere (Sevastopol and Moscow). Afil is very active in administrative assistance to Azerbaijani migrants, and also at other social and economic levels. According to him, the number of Azerbaijani migrants decreased from 20,000 in 2013 to 13,000 (aggregate data) in 2015, since many have left because of the crisis. The association led by Afil is working closely with the Central Asian Aid Organization in Murmansk (AZIA), established on July 20, 2008 by an Uzbek diaspora leader (Paridokhon Nasirova, born in 1960 in Andijan). Both diaspora associations have developed a rather strong management experience for managing various aspects of social, economic and security life of the migrants.

Being secure in the Great North: representations of the Kola Peninsula, between stability and security

Despite the remoteness of the region, the Kola Peninsula is traditionally characterised as a magnet for migrant workers who came from other republics of the former USSR or from Moscow and St. Petersburg. Interesting results from the biographical interviews conducted in Murmansk and Language tests³⁴ for migrants organised by the University of Murmansk between 2013 and 2015 showed that migrants have developed strategies of consolidation in the Russian North. Over a third of migrants opted for the temporary entry visa, or for the residence visa, although tests are more difficult than those for getting the business license. The local office of the FMS in Murmansk confirms that every year between 5000 and 7000 foreigners obtain a residence permit (*vid na zhitel'stvo*) for five years with a residence permit or a temporary visa (*razreshenie na vremennoe prozhivanie*) for three years, bringing them into the category of permanent residents of the Russian Federation. Over the 2011-2014 period, trends in the number of foreign members of the CIS obtaining a temporary residence permit was growing (FMS data reports 2011, 2012 and 2013)³⁵. The motivation of such a choice is explained by the fact that the certificate to obtain a higher status (registration and residence permit) gives the right to obtain a patent and live on Russian territory for three years (*razreshenie na vremennoe prozhivanie*), whereas the certificate for obtaining the license (valid only one year) gives only the right to work. According to anthropologist Elena Zmeeva from the Social Science Research Centre in Barents / Apatity (MGGU), the reasons guiding the choice of migrants to the Kola Peninsula are essentially economic, political, and are linked to conflict in their country or region of origin. However, these choices are also explained by

³³ Nakhichevan is renowned for its elite and its intellectuals (the Aliev dynasty is also a native of Nakhichevan). Baku is also known for its aristocracy and its elites, which provides a major reputation to the Azerbaijanis who are from there.

³⁴ These tests cost between 2,000 and 4,000 rubles depending on the nature of the test (license, residence permit, citizenship) at the University of Murmansk. Sometimes dubious private institutions require ten times that price in Murmansk and some suitable arrangements. Moreover, in order to obtain the license one must undergo a medical test that costs 7,000 rubles. (Interviews and personal observations in Murmansk, and during testing in Murmansk in March 2016).

³⁵ *Federal'naiia sluzhba migratsii Murmanskoi oblasti*, information collected by Alexandra Burtseva.

the presence of relatives, compatriots and the absence of conflict (Razumova, 2004), security and stability of employment which characterize this northern region (Zmeeva, 2011) (Figure 12). In addition, there are few illegal workers in Murmansk and its region, as well as Norilsk. These highly monitored cities are hardly livable without a legal status and various on-site observations show this well. As soon as they arrive, migrants are looking for ways to pass language tests to obtain a work permit or a license. They are aware that their legal status is a way to avoid risks, and to find themselves struggling in informal criminal networks, what could become a true addiction to risks and which is, in fact, a reality too for some of them (personal observations and interviews Norilsk in July 2015 and in Murmansk in March 2016).

Our results of in-depth, biographical interviews conducted in March 2016 confirm investigations conducted by the Social Science Centre Apatity (MGGU) with 900 Caucasians (North and South) since January 2015 and the findings of Zmeeva³⁶, (Zmeeva, 2011). The economic factor ranks first in the responses: ability to find work, opportunities in the labor market, earning more money, work to finance a wedding, a house, buying a land plot. However, this does not imply that the choices are limited to the Kola Peninsula, as everywhere in Russia the main motivations for migration are economic. So there is something else that guide the choice of migrants to this polar region of Russia (as to other places elsewhere, such as the Yamalo-Nenets peninsula in Tyumen region). Why do migrants come to work in Murmansk? What are their motivations? This question was posed to each migrant entering the survey: the main motivation was clearly the presence of relatives, friends, or fellows: "I have a brother who works here", "my mother lives here / I came to see her", "my father lived here for 10 years", "a friend told me that I could work here" are fragments of recurrent answers during these interviews. The importance of belonging to a clan or a sub-clan, is also highlighted in this survey as an important variable. Several levels intervene in the labour market and employment: Azerbaijanis employers, as well the Uzbeks claim that they make their choice primarily among their countrymen. So a "socio-ethnic" stratification is looming through the organisation of recruitment and horizontal strategies between Caucasian and Central Asian ethnic groups such as Tajiks and Uzbeks. They all are well informed through the media and other means of communication: mobile phone, internet / skype, trailer on TV, etc. Moreover, an important element is to stress for explaining the choice of migrants in this region: it is the qualification, the presentation of the Kola Peninsula as a "space or zone without ethnic conflict" (Razumova 2004). The Murmansk region is characterised by a high level of ethnic tolerance, and this is one of the major reasons why migrants operate this choice, especially for migrants who suffered earlier from ethnic conflicts, such as Nagorno-Karabakh, the two Chechen wars, and also the massacres in Osh in Kyrgyzstan in Central Asia, and more recently the war in Ukraine. Stability in Murmansk can be explained by the history of its settlement, the military history, the industrial history of the city and of the region but also by the importance of cultural interactions in this region, as briefly described above. Indeed, socio-cultural adaptation of populations in the North Russian was a necessary

³⁶ Zmeeva conducted a major survey in 2004-2005, in two samples: the inhabitants of several towns of the peninsula, and the migrants "kavkazcy" from North and South Caucasus.

condition for successful integration into the regional ethnic community and therefore intense process of acculturation.

Another important parameter also explains the attraction of the Murmansk region for migrants: it is good relations with the local population, with employers, with the owners of apartments rented by migrants. Many migrants speak of their employer with respect and vice versa. The willingness of companies to protect the stability of employment and thus their productivity in a region where overall security prevails and where administrative rules are followed, can result in the good care of migrants (language tests, support for getting administrative documents, insurance policy) by the employer himself (PEK, transport and logistics, Murmansk). Of course, the situation behind the scene is different, as everywhere, and employees of FMS testify (interviews in Murmansk, July 12, 2015). Nevertheless, despite these situations, unfortunately found at much higher levels and worrying elsewhere in Russia, migrants put forward as an argument to choose this region the emotional comfort in work, in everyday life, and the quality of human relationships in business, the public health system, the stores and the presence of the police. Finally, as regards the opinions and representations of the inhabitants of Murmansk non-migrants, they are very divided and reflect in some way the European reactions, especially since the beginning of the migration crisis and the war in Syria. The study and participation in social networks (such as facebook and V kontakte) show very mixed reactions to the creation of an adaptation center for children of migrants in Murmansk. Especially, as in Western Europe, a confusion is made between refugees, migrant workers and their children in the minds of people. The Russian propaganda of refusal of the "others" affected the tolerance of Mourmanskais, who were not making such judgments before, and accepted Azeris and Central Asians as the only persons able to conduct trade, to sell good fruits and vegetables, to open "exotic" restaurants, in the continuation of what already existed during Soviet times.

Conclusion. Avoidance, risk management in labour migration

Generations of people born in the Soviet Union between 1950 and 1970 hold an important function in the formation of current migration processes in Russia, but also of the meaning of migration and its possibilities. They are characterised as intermediate generations and have a major reticular dimension in which to view the new generations of migrants. Through this analysis, mechanisms unfold that can mend a social relations arrangements system to prevent social insecurity (Castel, 2003). Diaspora associations help, as we glimpsed above, guaranteeing a form of "global" security. Here the concept of "embeddedness" developed by Granovetter (Granovetter, 1973 and 1985) allows one to consider economic exchanges without isolating them from social relations. However, it is clear that the filigree composed of parents and networks of compatriots, especially among Azerbaijanis present in the Murmansk region since Soviet times, are crucial to support access of migrants to the labor market, and also to control newcomers, and to establish trans-generational networks. In

Murmansk, this testifies of this notion of reticular installation that highlights the importance of historical factors, along with the social capital necessary for the construction of networks and careers of migrants.

The capital integration into networks and the development of interpersonal relationships provide opportunities for migrants to broaden their fields of contractual opportunities and to loosen the initial stress. The dynamic conditions of "social embeddedness" of these practices strongly affect the contractual path of migrants by allowing them to access arrangements deemed most interesting to them. Networks are mostly based on the principle of reciprocity, which implies the existence of symmetrical entities (Polanyi, 1944), reciprocity being defined as a double but not instantaneous transfer. The counterparty, or the reciprocal transfer (such as an airfare or transportation fee funded by the migrant's family against a later transfer money, or setting up a small business to run a family and community waterwheel) will depend on the existing tension in the group, on social pressure, on the social obligation to give back which, in turn, can lead to exclusion from the group in case of non-fulfillment of the obligation, or the counter-obligation. The results of this study about the complex individual and collective strategies that integrate migration first as a resource but also as a risk, and the choice of the Murmansk region, demonstrate overall strategies to avoid risks.

For these newcomers, Murmansk (as other circumpolar cities) is not a city like any other. There, life develops in a logic of insularity that is unique to people living in the Great-North, evoking the continent "Materik" as a distant country, and another land. Adaptation and representations of migrants differ with respect to the far North and the polar cold. Eduard, 34, a native of Massali, who arrived in Murmansk in 1996 (his father began trading in Murmansk in 1987) still remembers the shock at arrival on the tarmac down the plane, the biting, scathing cold, he said:

"For me, the north is the cold (*holod*). The polar night is pure hell (*iad*). At first, one expects to see the sun and one understands that it will not come ... In contrast, the polar day is paradise (*raj*)! I just love it! And I like skiing, I love snow, I know everyone does not like it, but I do! One thing is certain, the North requires being prepared, and it's not easy".

Vugar, 32, also from Massali, arrived in the late 2000s, and evokes its tropism for sea fishing:

"I do not have Russian citizenship yet, and I would like to go to the sea ... I used to go fishing there (in Azerbaijan), I lived close to the Caspian, I love the sea ... I would like to become a fisherman but not on big boats rather on small trawlers for crabs, all kinds of fish, but not more than a week at sea. But to go out to the sea, you need citizenship ... for me the North it is the sea, it is fishing, and when I arrived here I had not thought of all that, I was not sure where I would find myself... and then there are the people, and the Azeris will tell you they have the wrong course because of the cold and everything, but in fact they get quickly attached to the North, and to the people from the North, here it is very unusual ... "(Interview Murmansk, March 2015).

They are obviously marked by the fierce climate and the geographical isolation from the rest of Russia, but they also integrate quickly the symbolic and physical domination of the

industrial complex, the mono-industries and mono-cities. Those who manage to integrate the complex access to a status with higher qualification, and this gives migrants a more heroic character, moreover on old pioneer fronts. By their own professional and personal journey of migrants who left the Caucasus to "realise themselves" in the North, they renew the myth of the pioneer, and adapt to post-Soviet conditions of market economy and free movement³⁷.

It follows from this study that labour migration is a major social fact in the Caucasian landscape in response to social and civil insecurity. This alternative is a means of informal solidarity (Lautier, 2004), a kind of insurance against risk, through which they can develop new forms of mobilisation against poverty, an response to the mismanagement of the states, to the loss of the 'welfare state' (loss of safety nets, de-modernisation, predation of the means of production) and to the bankruptcy of the social status of the men in these patriarchal Caucasian societies: men were- and remain- the guarantors of the sustainability of the social and family order. Nevertheless, migration implies a dependency on the global situation, including on the political and economic situation of host countries, as we see today in Russia. They also depend on various forms of allegiance to the migrant networks, and therefore on various loyalty systems that characterise these complex systems.

Finally, in the post-Soviet societies that could be called "post-heroic", the assurance of the survival of the community, of the family, and of the relatives should be sought in the re-weaving of norms and networks that existed before the end of the USSR and have reshaped in face of new global contingencies.

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³⁷ Interviews with migrants from Azerbaijan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, Norilsk, July 2015.

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