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BRAIN DRAIN FROM RUSSIA AFTER FEBRUARY 24TH 2022

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ANALYSIS

How Putin's Partial Mobilization Turned into Total Mobilization of Migrants

By Ekaterina Vorobeva (Research Centre for East European Studies at the University of Bremen)

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Abstract

The "partial mobilization" recently announced in Russia has triggered an unprecedented outmigration that may amount to 1 million people (Tofaniuk and Sapronova 2022). It has played different yet crucial roles in the lives of recent Russian migrants, forcing members of various social groups—from non-migrants to transmigrants—into emigration. It is important to acknowledge this diversity in order to develop a more nuanced understanding of ongoing migration processes and their possible outcomes.

Introduction

On September 21, 2022, Russian president Vladimir Putin announced partial mobilization of reservists, marking the first time the measure had been taken since World War II. According to the decree "On the Declaration of Partial Mobilization in the Russian Federation," men in the armed forces reserve who are aged 25–35, who have previously served in the Russian army, and who have combat experience or military specialties were called up to join the Russian armed forces in Ukraine. The target number of mobilized reservists announced by the Ministry of Defense was set at 300,000 people. Although official sources have remained silent about the reasons for this mobilization, Russia's recent defeats in Eastern Ukraine, accompanied by significant losses of military personnel, could have compelled the Russian government to take such a firm action.

Despite clear directives as to who should be mobilized, military commissars committed numerous egregious violations across the country: students, the elderly, and even disabled people were called up. As a result of this inadequate implementation, the partial mobilization resulted in country-wide protests and outmigration of reservists to the neighboring states of Finland, Georgia, and Kazakhstan. Although official statistics are lacking, as many as one million Russians may have left the country since the announcement of partial mobilization (as of October 4—see Tofaniuk and Sapronova 2022).

However, was partial mobilization the main driver of—or just one of many reasons for—the mass outmigration? In other words, what role did the partial mobilization play in the decision-making processes of recent Russian immigrants? To answer this question, the article explores recent original qualitative data collected from Russian reservists. The dataset includes 15 in-depth phone interviews conducted between September 28 and October 8, 2022. The interviewees currently reside in Slovenia, Finland, Kazakhstan, and Georgia; some of them are still on the move to their final destinations, which include Serbia and Israel. Prior to immigration, the majority lived in St. Petersburg and Moscow. Almost all interviewees hold higher education degrees; they work in the fields of the IT sector, engineering, marketing, and other industries. Around half of them are married with kids.

Mobilizing Potential Migrants

As the data demonstrate, recent Russian migrants appear to be a relatively heterogenous group with respect to their migration histories and aspirations. Four major groups emerge from the collected empirical data; for each group, the partial mobilization played a different role in their decision-making regarding emigration. These groups are:

1. sedentary males, for whom the partial mobilization was a primary reason for emigration;
2. trailing family members of reservists, for whom it was a secondary reason for emigration;
3. soon-to-be migrants, for whom it accelerated their migration process; and
4. transmigrants, for whom the partial mobilization halted their transnational lifestyles.

Each of these groups is discussed in more detail below.

The majority of interviewees decided to emigrate shortly after the partial mobilization was announced. Men usually took 1–3 days to decide how to react to the new measure. However, hearing in the news about and observing with their own eyes flagrant violations during the recruitment process made them realize the urgent necessity of emigration. They had to sort out related matters in the shortest possible time: resigning from jobs or arranging remote work, choosing an immigration destination, and moving out of and/or renting their apartments in Russia. Interviewees' choice of immigration destinations depended on the availability of affordable flights as well as on their support networks of friends, relatives, and acquaintances abroad. Sergei (names have been changed to maintain confidentiality) describes his quick decision-making process:

> During the day I looked at destinations, got an idea. In a day, the next day I woke up and started looking at tickets for the next weekend. It was Wednesday or Thursday, I don't remember. I was already looking at weekend tickets to leave faster. Everywhere was overpriced, no matter whether it was Kazakhstan, Georgia, something else. I had guys in Georgia, my close acquaintances, friends. Therefore, without thinking twice, I bought tickets to Vladikavkaz—there were no direct ones—and I took a trip from Vladikavkaz there.

The second wave of migrants is now in the process of formation. Family members of reservists who initially stayed in Russia to deal with the sale of property and prepare the necessary documentation will likely soon join their partners abroad. For these so-called trailing wives and children, the partial mobilization was not their primary reason for emigration; it is a desire to keep the family together that pushes them to follow the male heads of their households. Alexei explains:

> My family doesn't mind [joining me abroad]. The family is now deciding when to do so. But no one will answer this question except ourselves, because as time has shown, it should have been done yesterday, but psychologically it is not easy to decide on this, to change country and probably start everything over from scratch. Since I do everything remotely anyway, I don't care where I am […] in principle the situation is getting to the point that it [them joining me] just needs to be accelerated already.

A third group of interviewees had had aspirations or plans to immigrate since long before the partial mobilization was announced. As economic conditions and the political situation in Russia deteriorated rapidly over the past few years, some interviewees began thinking about emigration—in some cases even before the COVID-19 pandemic. This was the case of Maxim, who started planning his emigration in 2018. Since then, he has been busy authenticating his degree, saving money, and looking for a good job offer in Canada, the immigration destination he and his wife chose due to the country's high standard of living. However, the pandemic interfered with their plans; the number of open vacancies decreased and physical mobility was restricted. Therefore, the family's immigration was postponed until after the pandemic. But when the partial mobilization threatened his freedom of movement, Maxim bought a plane ticket to Kazakhstan and left. His wife and three kids are expected to join him in a month after completing the necessary preparations for permanent emigration. For this group of soon-to-be migrants, the partial mobilization therefore provided a strong impulse to leave as soon as possible; however, they would have emigrated sooner or later anyway. As Pavel, who has moved from St. Petersburg to Slovenia, explains:

> In fact, I've been thinking about moving for a long time. Probably, mobilization was just a push. But in general, I've been thinking about moving for a long time, I don't know, maybe five years ago I started thinking about it.

Finally, the partial mobilization severely affected transmigrants, individuals whose lives took place across borders (Levitt and Schiller 2004). Fear for their own safety in Russia put to an end to the cross-border mobility of transmigrants; some interviewees felt as though they had been pushed to abandon their transnational lifestyles and turn into real emigrants. However, the partial mobilization has not stopped them from engaging in so-called digital transnationalism: transmigrants remain in touch with their families, friends, and business partners in Russia. For example, due to his business activities, Andrei was a transmigrant living across the borders of Russia and Finland. However, in the wake of recent events, he no longer felt safe in Russia and decided to move from Moscow to Helsinki for the time being. Andrei describes his displeasure at the necessity to abandon his transnational lifestyle and to cut off ties to Russia, at least temporarily:

> I love the region where I was born, I love Karelia, I adore it. I'm not at all ready to break ties with it; rather, I never wanted to do it and I don't want to now. Of course, if I am forced to do this, I don't know, just by some very extreme steps that are already taken by the government, of course, I will be forced, but I am not ready for this break yet, I don't want to do it. So far, there are no conditions that would force me to give up my friends, my life there, everything that I have achieved there, that I have. I have real estate there, I have a family, I have a job. There are people I promised to help, there are non-profit organizations, social projects that are also important to me, I put my soul into it. […] I wanted to be a man of the world, not an emigrant; [I wanted to be] a person without labels. I would like to live freely, move around the world.

As a Final Remark

While it has struggled to marshal troops, the partial mobilization has proved to be more successful at mobilizing reservists and others as migrants. It not only pushed the sedentary population to move abroad, but also turned the family members of reservists and transmigrants into emigrants. Finally, it served to accelerate the emigration of soon-to-be migrants. Thus, although active outmigration has been taking place for more than

six months now, the announcement of partial mobilization and its subsequent poor implementation significantly accelerated and intensified the process of emigration, creating an unprecedented situation in Russia and in neighboring states alike.

The data presented demonstrate the existence of at least four major groups within the recent flow of Russian migrants. These groups differ with regard to the role that the partial mobilization played in their migration histories and aspirations. Acknowledging this diversity is vital for several reasons. First of all, it allows for a more nuanced and precise understanding of the ongoing migration processes. Second, the future trajectories of migrants—e.g., the length of their stays abroad and their integration efforts—may depend heavily on their aspirations for migration. Awareness of those differences therefore improves our ability to predict their behavior. Finally, when it comes to policymaking and humanitarian aid, exploring this diversity can help improve our understanding of which forms of assistance and support mechanisms members of each group might need.

About the Author
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ANALYSIS

Russian State-Run Media Coverage of War-Related Brain Drain

By Daria Zakharova (Research Centre for East European Studies at the University of Bremen)

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Abstract
The Russian invasion of Ukraine has caused an unprecedented outflow of Ukrainian refugees to Europe and other neighboring countries. Russia has also faced its own waves of emigration, which reached their climax after the announcement of "partial mobilization" in the country on September 21, 2022. This article analyzes how Russian state-run media have been treating emigrants and covering the process.

Beginning of War: IT Emigration
The beginning of the war caused the phenomenon of "IT emigration" from Russia. Western sanctions on the Russian financial sector that aggravated the outsourcing of IT services, coupled with the withdrawal of some companies essential for IT developers (AWS, Google Cloud, Jetbrains and others) from the Russian market, negatively impacted the sector. Moreover, Russian developers are often pursued by foreign recruiters. These factors combined to result in more than 100,000 IT workers leaving Russia in the first two months following the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Russian state-run media tend to hush up those topics that cast the Russian government in a negative light (for instance, the scale of Russian losses in the war in Ukraine). However, the problem of "IT emigration" at the beginning of the war was highlighted even by the most pro-governmental media. The state-run TV channel NTV aired a news segment titled "How to Accelerate Import-Substitution in the IT Industry and Motivate IT Specialists to Work in the Russian Federation." In the video, Natalya Kasperky, the co-founder of Kaspersky Lab, indicated that there had been a significant outflow

of Russian developers. Moreover, she clearly linked the phenomenon to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, or, as she called it, the "special military operation."

In covering the phenomenon of "IT emigration," Russian state-run media have tended to stress the advantageous environment for developers created by the Russian government through its introduction of a range of reforms. State-run TV channel Rossiya 24 aired a news segment titled "Battle for IT Specialists: Breakthrough Solutions Are Needed." In the video, Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin intimated that brain drain among developers is the result of "external pressure." "The government is taking steps to support the IT sector in the face of external pressure. The main task is to create comfortable conditions for industry workers. This also applies to housing," Mishustin said.

In March 2022 the Russian government implemented a range of measures to support the IT sector. According to *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, these included income tax exemption, preferential mortgages for developers, and even exemption from military service for IT specialists (in Russia, the army is formed on the basis of obligatory conscription—D.Z.).

As a result of these measures, state-run media pursued the narrative that the Russian IT sector is fine and continues to develop. For instance, in its article "Sanctions Are Not a Problem. Russian IT Industry Continues Developing," the state-run news outlet Vesti.ru wrote that "developers who left Russia after 24 February 2022 are slowly returning to the country" thanks to "the measures for the development of IT proposed by Vladimir Putin."

The measures implemented by the Russian government in the IT sector have genuinely been supportive, offering developers, for example, one of the lowest mortgage interest rates in the country. However, the claims that those developers who left Russia in the first months of the war are returning have been confirmed neither by independent demographers nor by non-governmental researchers.

Mobilization: Mass Exodus

Another wave of mass emigration from Russia was caused by the Russian President's September 21 announcement of a mobilization. This was officially declared as a partial mobilization, meaning that it was aimed at recruiting only those who possess a valuable qualification (for instance, signalmen) or men with experience in military service below the age of 35. In practice, however, many men without military experience started receiving mobilization orders. This caused a rapid and mass outflow of Russians who feared that mobilization might affect them. According to diverse estimates, the number of "mobilization emigrants" may total 700,000 people since September 21. Compared to the IT wave of emigration, this brain drain has been covered by state-run media and perceived by officials in a more negative way.

Prohibit Departure and Restrict Rights

While some Russian men fleeing the mobilization faced restrictions on leaving Russia, the country has not been shutting the borders to everyone—neither for men nor for women. However, there have been many calls for a comprehensive prohibition on young men capable of fighting leaving the country.

Russian Federation Council (upper house of the Russian Parliament) senator Andrey Tsvetkov expressed support for such an initiative in late September, shortly after the mobilization was announced. "Every person of military age, in the current situation, should be banned from traveling abroad," he stated in an interview to Russian news outlet RIA Novosti. The spokesperson of the Russian State Duma (lower house of Russian Parliament), Vyacheslav Volodin, stated that Russia was drafting lists of the men fleeing the country and suggested that the cars they were abandoning on the Russian border should be sent to Russian soldiers fighting in Ukraine. "Their cars are already being abandoned. By the way, we also need to think about whom to give these cars to. Maybe the families of those guys who went to fight? It will be right," he stated during the plenary session of the Parliament.

Russian state-run TV channel NTV aired a prime-time political show in which experts discussed the prospect of disenfranchising those who fled Russia during mobilization. During the heated discussion, Elena Nikolaeva, a member of the Russian State Duma, stated that "those who leave their homeland at a difficult moment should be struck down in their rights." After a presenter of the show asked Elena, whether this was legal, she claimed that "Russian law is a living mechanism that can be altered according to the circumstances."

Russian state-run news agency Regnum published an article titled "One Cannot Run from Himself. Who Are Those and Where Are Those Who Betrayed Their Homeland?" The introduction of the article asks: "Is it possible that all these cowardly, treacherous, hypocritical people will return and continue to eat heartily? No, this cannot be allowed. By no means is it possible!" The article goes on to conclude that welcoming back those who fled the country after the announcement of mobilization would undermine and betray those Russians who went to the front.

Good Russia, Bad Emigrants

In the face of massive emigration, Russian state-run media and politicians have started spreading the narrative that life in Russia has actually been improving.

Vyacheslav Volodin stressed that he does not understand why Russians are fleeing abroad *en masse*. "Where are they running now? We created stability, the Eurasian Economic Union, economic freedoms. In a while these people will stand in a queue to return to Russia," he commented on air at state-run Duma TV.

Russian media outlet Lifenews published an interview with the Russian Federation Council senator Andrey Klimov in which he claimed that while emigrants would not be persecuted in Russia, they would still lose out. "No one will reimburse them their losses of a hasty escape abroad, and whether leaving the native land in danger will bring luck to the majority of the fugitives is a big question," Klimov said.

Simultaneously, the media and government officials have been spreading the narrative that something is wrong with the "mobilization emigrants" themselves.

State-run news agency RIA-Novosti published an article under the headline "Fleeing from Their Own: There Is No Turning Back." The article describes "mobilization emigrants" as people "without the categories of motherland, history, duty" and "deprived of basic values." It pins the blame for the existence of these "traitors" on the fall of the Soviet Union and the formation of "consumer culture." "Those who renounce their country in difficult times also renounce their ancestors and betray them," the article summarizes.

Russian politician and Head of the Chechen Republic Ramzan Kadyrov described the "mobilization emigrants" as "men who cannot be called men." "How can you, when your people and state, your president, need you, leave your homeland and run away? And where will you run from death?" he asked on Telegram.

In general, the state-run media describe the "mobilization emigrants" in a negative way, often referring to them as panicking fugitives, traitors, and alarmists.

Russians Are Not Welcome Abroad

Another narrative that Russian officials and state-run media have been propagating about the emigrants is that they are highly unwelcome abroad.

Kazakhstan has been one of the main destinations of Russian "mobilization emigrants" due to its proximity to the country, affordability, accessibility by car, and relatively neutral position on Russia. State-run Izvestiya has published a string of articles with such headlines as "'Damage Their Cars!' How Kazakhstan Treats Runaway Russians" and "How Kazakhs Bully Fled Russians and Do Not Let Them into Apartments." The coverage stresses Kazakhs' bad attitude toward arriving Russians and the range of types of persecution to which they are subjected. In one video, a Kazakh woman tells a Russian emigrant that no one invited them to Kazakhstan; in another, a Kazakh man urges his compatriots to "kick Russians out of the queues and not to rent them property." "Kazakhstanis criticize the fleeing Russians. Complaining about the long lines. And they call on their citizens to oppress Russians," Russian media coverage claims.

Other state-run media claim that Russians "should not go to Georgia" because of potential "provocations" against Russian citizens in neighboring countries. Pravda.ru published an interview with the historian Boris Dolgov in which he claimed that: "There is a time of mass provocations. Now the destabilization of the situation along Russian borders is included in the program of the West. This is obvious. Therefore, the creation of social chaos, including in the neighboring territories, which in some way, naturally, will affect Russia, is also a part of the plans of the West."

The state-run TV channel Rossiya 24 issued a reportage titled "They Run, but No One Waits for Them" dedicated to Russian "mobilization emigrants." According to the reportage, Russians are not welcomed in the countries to which they flee, such as Georgia. Moreover, these countries are allegedly too poor to actually accommodate large numbers of emigrants. Nor, according to the news presenter, is Europe going to accommodate "mobilization emigrants." "Unemployment is growing in Europe—the economy is in decline due to anti-Russian sanctions," so "alarmists from mobilization are hardly welcomed," the coverage summarizes.

The narrative of "unwelcome Russians" is not a complete falsification, as many countries—especially in Europe—have imposed significant barriers to the entrance of Russian citizens since the beginning of the war in Ukraine. Many European countries do not consider the announced mobilization in Russia as a reason to mitigate entrance rules; only Germany has left open the option of granting political asylum to those who have fled mobilization.

Kazakhstan, demonized by the Russian state-run media for its "russophobic" attitude, has in reality opened its doors to "mobilization emigrants." Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, the president of Kazakhstan, claims that it is essential to greet the arriving Russian citizens with humanity, patience, and organization. "We must take care of the coming Russian citizens and ensure their safety. This is a political and humanitarian issue. I have instructed the government to take the necessary measures," Tokaev indicated when discussing the situation with Russian emigrants.

Conclusion

The propaganda on Russian "war-related" emigrants displays both "classical traits"—such as blaming the West, besmirching emigrants, and praising Russia—and new elements. It is quite a new phenomenon for the state-

run media to cover a post-Soviet country not opposed to Russia, like Kazakhstan, in a negative way. Kazakhstan has become—in the coverage of state-run media—"russophobic" and "dangerous" for Russians to live in. This narrative may be an attempt on the part of the Russian government to curb mass emigration by presenting emigration as undesirable.

The difference between coverage of "mobilization emigration," on the one hand, and "IT emigration," on the other hand, is also quite stark. The first category are covered in the classic way Russian propaganda treats dissenters: according to this coverage, the problem is with the "mobilization emigrants" themselves, who are described as bad/traitors/fugitives/alarmists, and not with the government. When covering "IT emigration," meanwhile, state-run media take the opposite approach: they confirm that the problem lies with the government, or certain governmental policies, and do not refer to the developers in a humiliating way. This may also indicate that the government understands the impact of losing approximately 100,000 developers, but does not yet find the emigration of 700,000 other people critical.

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ANALYSIS

Russia: The Migration Dimension of the War in Ukraine

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Abstract
The Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022 has drastically changed both the internal situation in the Russian Federation (RF) and the country's relationship with the international community. The impact of these developments is multidimensional and has a significant human dimension, including the formation of new migration flows marked by high shares of young people, males, and members of various elite groups. The elite migrant flow generally includes four major categories of migrants: academic personnel, highly skilled workers (including representatives of professional, business, creative, and athletic elites), students, and so-called investment migrants.

Economic Impact
Shrinking economic output[1] and the withdrawal of numerous transnational companies from the RF have threatened the jobs and livelihoods of a large segment of the Russian population, hurting first and foremost its elite segments. Indeed, the introduction of new sanctions cut the long-term international ties established in the economic, political, academic, artistic, and athletic spheres, to name just a few, impacting the lives of millions of people, chief among them the representatives of various professional, business, academic, cultural, and athletic elites.

This negative impact has been aggravated by both the transborder transfers of transnational corporations' offices and the flight of numerous Russian businesses, as well as individual enterpreneurs, to locations outside the RF. These movements, mostly economically and professionally motivated, have been supplemented by the emigration of people opposing the war as a matter of principle.

Second Wave Exceeds First
The second wave of emigration, significantly larger than the first, formed as a direct consequence of the decla-

1 In particular, Russia's industrial output in September 2022 was 96.9% of that in September 2021 (Federal'naia Sluzhba Gosudarstvennoi Statistiki, "Operativnye Pokazateli," 2022, https://rosstat.gov.ru/).

ration by Russian President Vladimir Putin on September 21 of a 300,000-strong "partial" mobilization and the subsequent announcement by RF Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu that up to 25 million Russian citizens might be eligible for mobilization orders—an announcement that *de facto* involved in the war the majority of the RF's population (between the potential reservists and their family members). These developments and the subsequent mishandling of the mobilization process, marked by disorganization and numerous widely reported instances of corruption and abuse, acted as additional push factors of migration, which took on an increasingly politicized character.

Thus, the migration flow in 2022 has essentially consisted of two—separate and consecutive—subflows. These are far from the only large-scale population movements in post-Soviet Russian history: they follow the "brain drain" of the 1990s and the smaller in scale but consistent population movements of the first two decades of the current century. Yet there are huge differences between the current developments and previous trends.

Historical Perspective

Russia saw its position in the global migration chain change drastically after the dissolution of the USSR in 1991. In its aftermath, the RF quickly became an active participant in the globalization process, following the general trend among those states that were previously the centers of multinational empires: the United Kingdom, France, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, Belgium, and especially the territorially contiguous empires (Germany, Austria, and Turkey) have received, since their empires' collapse, considerable migrant flows of two major types. The first wave was the permanent—and mostly politically motivated—return migration of the representatives of the former "imperial" nation to their ethnic homelands (the Britons, French, Spaniards, Turks, etc.). They were soon followed by migrants from developing countries—primarily the former colonies of the metropole. These were people who spoke its language, knew its culture, and could rely on the support there of their long-established ethnic diasporas.

As a result, Russia—previously one of the most isolated countries in the world—quickly became, after 1991, the center of a vast Eurasian migration system that was one of the four largest in the world (alongside those in North America; Western Europe; and the Middle East, centered on the Persian Gulf). By 2010, more than 12 million RF residents (about 8.5% of its population) had been born outside the country. In 2015, Russia ranked third in the world—after India and Mexico—in terms of its number of emigrants: 10.5 million.[2] While most of these migrants moved within the post-Soviet space, in 1991–2005 alone, more than 1.3 million Russian citizens obtained permits for permanent emigration to the West.[3] Overall, the number of those who were born in Russia but currently live in countries outside the former USSR is estimated at approximately 3,000,000.[4]

This flow was generated by both the "pull" and "push" factors of migration. In the case of emigration outside the post-Soviet region, an important role was played by the liberalization of the migration regime and the emergence of opportunities to work and study abroad; higher living standards; prospects for professional growth; and the genearally welcoming atmosphere for Russian scholars, students, and professionals at that time. "Push" factors included the economic and political instability in Russia, specifically the rapid degradation of Russian state-run industry and of the academic sphere. Research expenditure as a share of Russian GDP was 0.50% in 1992 and 0.24% in 2000 (representing 2.43% and 1.69% of the federal budget, respectively). During this period (1992–2000), the number of those employed by the academic institutions fell from 1,532,000 to 887,729 (a 42% drop), while the number of researchers declined from 804,000 to 425,954 (a 47% drop).[5]

These processes led to the formation of significant elite Russian diasporas in the major receiving countries. Already by 2010–11, more than 660,000 university-educated Russians were living abroad, putting the RF into the category of states with large elite diasporas (300,000 to 1,000,000 migrants with a university degree)—along with such countries as Mexico, South Korea, Vietnam, Iran, Taiwan, Morocco, and Colombia.[6] Of particular importance was the massive emigration of Russian scholars and educators: I previously estimated the size of this elite diaspora at about 300,000–350,000 in 2012, including, as of 2015, approximately 56,000 students studying abroad.

2 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, Trends in International Migration Stock: The 2015 Revision (New York: United Nations, 2015).

3 Anatolii Vishnevskii, ed., Naseleniie Rossii 2003-2004: Odinnadtsatyi-dvenadtsatyi ezhegodnyi demograficheskii doklad (Moscow: Nauka, 2006), 325.

4 "'Meduza' ob emigratsii iz Rossii," Demoscope 945–6 (17–30 May 2022), http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/2022/0945/gazeta01.php.

5 Federal'naia sluzhba gosudarstvennoi statistiki, "Rossiia v Tsifrakh—2020," 2021, https://gks.ru/bgd/regl/b20_11/Main.htm; Gosudarstvennyi komitet Rossiiskoi Federatsii po statistike, Rossiiskii Statisticheskii ezhegodnik 2003 (Moscow, 2003), 531.

6 This group is second to that of countries with extra-large diasporas (more than 1,000,000 people). As of 2015, that group included India (2,080,000), China (1,655,000), the Philippines, the UK, and Germany. See Irina Dezhina, Evgeny Kuznetsov, and Andrei Korobkov, Razvitie Sotrudnichestva s Russkoiazychnoi Diasporoi: Opyt, Problemy, Perspektivy (Moscow, 2015), http://russiancouncil.ru/upload/Report-Scidiaspora-23-Rus.pdf, 18.

The academic flow was heavily dominated by basic and technical sciences experts, while specialists in social sciences and the humanities accounted for just 6.1% of the total in 2002–03.[7] The flow was also skewed geographically toward the two highly developed Global North regions of North America and Western Europe, which respectively accounted for 30.4% and 42.4% of the intellectual migration flow. The largest receiving countries were the United States (28.7%) and Germany (19%); these two states also held first and second place, respectively, among receiving countries in practically all academic subfields.[8]

With the economic and political stabilization of the early Putin years, budgetary expenditures increased, peaking in 2015 at 2.81% of the federal budget (0.53% of GDP). This served to slow down the academic personnel decline and the elite outflow: between 2000 and 2019, the number of those employed in the academic sphere declined from 887,729 to 682,464 (or by 23.1%), while the number of researchers fell from 425,954 to 348,221 (or by 18.2%[9]—see Figures 1a and 1b below and Table 1 on p. 11). While the number of Russian students studying abroad remained relatively stable at 50,000–60,000, the RF during that period rebuilt its position as one of the leading hubs for international students—ranking sixth in the world behind the US, the UK, Australia, France, and Germany.[10] Their numbers grew steadily, from 153,800 in 2010/2011 to 298,000 in the 2019/2020 academic year.[11]

Figure 1a: Russian R&D Dynamics, 1992–2019: Personnel (mln.)

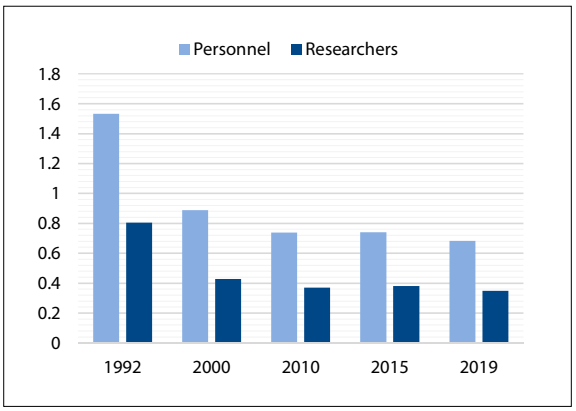
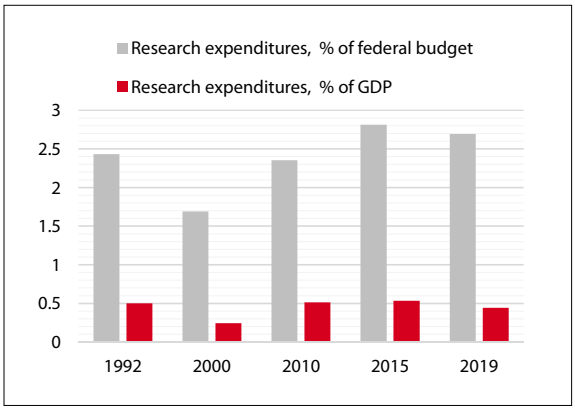


Figure 1b: Russian R&D Dynamics, 1992–2019: Expenditures



Source: Federal'naia sluzhba gosudarstvennoi statistiki, "Rossiia v Tsifrakh—2020," 2021, https://gks.ru/bgd/regl/b20_11/Main.htm*; Federal'naia sluzhba gosudarstvennoi statistiki, Rossiiskii Statisticheskii ezhegodnik 2009 (Moscow, 2009), 543, 553; Federal'naia sluzhba gosudarstvennoi statistiki, Rossiiskii Statisticheskii ezhegodnik 2020 (Moscow, 2020), 495–6,* https://rosstat.gov.ru/storage/mediabank/Ejegodnik_2020.pdf*; Gosudarstvennyi komitet Rossiiskoi Federatsii po statistike, Rossiiskii Statisticheskii ezhegodnik 2003 (Moscow, 2003), 531.*

Overall, it could be concluded that Russia transformed in the early 2000s from the country in deep economic and social crisis—and source of massive elite outflows—that it had been in the 1990s into a state with a moderate level of development that played multiple roles in the world migration chain: both sending and receiving migrants as well as acting as a migrant transit country. Russia, while losing its elite migrants to the more developed countries of the Global North, was at least partially substituting for their loss with immigration from less developed states, primarily those in the post-Soviet space. The impact of the "pull" factors of migration increased, while that of the "push" factors decreased, at least in relative terms.

After the Invasion

This multiplicity of roles was for the most part retained by the RF after the first invasion of Ukraine in 2014 (even under the conditions of the expanding sanctions regime) and during the general decline of migration activity worldwide as a result of COVID-19 restrictions.

Yet the events of 2022 have drastically changed the migration environment, returning it to a crisis level, with

7 A.V. Korobkov and Zh. A. Zaionchkovskaya, "Russian Brain Drain: Myths and Reality," Communist and Post-Communist Studies 45, no. 3-4 (September-December 2012): 332.

8 Ibid., 335–6. See also Andrei Korobkov, "Russian Academic Diaspora: Its Scale, Dynamics, Structural Characteristics, and Ties to the RF," in Migration from the Newly Independent States: 25 Years After the Collapse of the USSR, ed. Mikhail Denisenko, Salvatore Strozza, and Matthew Light (New York: Springer, 2020), 299–322.

9 Federal'naia sluzhba gosudarstvennoi statistiki, "Rossiia v Tsifrakh—2020;" Federal'naia sluzhba gosudarstvennoi statistiki, Rossiiskii Statisticheskii ezhegodnik 2020 (Moscow, 2020), 495–6, https://rosstat.gov.ru/storage/mediabank/Ejegodnik_2020.pdf.

10 "Mezhdunarodnye studenty," Unipage, 2019, https://www.unipage.net/ru/student_statistics.

11 Federal'naia sluzhba gosudarstvennoi statistiki, "Rossiia v Tsifrakh—2020;" Federal'naia sluzhba gosudarstvennoi statistiki, Rossiiskii Statisticheskii ezhegodnik 2020, 206, https://rosstat.gov.ru/storage/mediabank/Ejegodnik_2020.pdf.

the "push" factors of migration (such as the deteriorating political situation, sharp disagreements with governmental policies among certain segments of society, the unwillingness of many to serve in the RF military, the fear of losing jobs and sources of income, etc.) coming to the forefront.

When it comes to the contrast between current migration flows and previous post-Soviet flows, the following points should be noted:

- The 2022 migration waves are defined primarily by "push" factors, which have frequently forced people to leave even in the absence of adequate preparation (previous experience of work or study abroad, personal or professional networks) or clear prospects in destination countries.
- Migration in 2022 is frequently directed toward smaller and economically weaker countries than in the 1990s, including those in Eastern Europe, the post-Soviet space (Central Asia, the Caucasus), and the Persian Gulf, as well as Turkey and Mongolia. This may lead to the reversal of the trends that have dominated (especially elite) migration patterns in Central Eurasia for the last three decades. This reversal, which has important symbolic value, may create significant long-term labor-market and demographic problems for the RF.
- In contrast to previous migration waves, the current ones are marked by their hectic, spontaneous character and the heavy presence in the flow of young people working in the IT and business sectors, who are relatively flexible and could either seek jobs or create private-sector businesses. At the same time, there is also a significant share of people, especially within the academic bloc, who hold Humanities and Social Sciences degrees and have very limited prospects of finding jobs that correspond to their qualifications. Thus, even under the current crisis conditions, substantial return migration can be expected.
- In 2022, movement is further complicated by the heritage of the COVID-19 pandemic and the new limitations resulting from the 2022 sanctions—these are related to the blocking of RF-issued credit cards, the break-up of direct transportation links with most European countries, complications with getting visas, and frequently prohibitive airfare rates. An additional complication is presented by the recent proposals, in a number of Western countries, to arrest RF citizens or confiscate their property.
- A particular feature of the 2022 flows has been their "explosive," emergency character, marked by very high intensity in the initial weeks and a relatively quick decline thereafter.

There also exist visible differences between the flow that followed the developments of February 2022 and the flow that followed the events of September 2022. In particular,

- A noticeable discrepancy exists in terms of their scale and gender structure. The first flow was on the order of 100,000–150,000 people and was relatively balanced in gender terms, frequently including whole families with children. The second, which followed Putin's mobilization announcement, has been heavily dominated by young males. This in itself poses significant problems for Russia's demographic and economic future.
- The first flow was directed, first and foremost, toward all the countries neighboring Russia. The current one, meanwhile, is taking place under the conditions of changing public attitudes and governmental policies toward RF citizens, even those who oppose Putin's actions. This dynamic could lead to general change in the direction of migration flows.
- The flow of the first half of 2022 was marked by heavy presence of foreign citizens and people with dual citizenship or other legal status, who moved to the countries where they held such status. The participants in the current flow, who are primarily RF citizens, face additional legal problems in receiving countries by comparison.
- The original flow included large numbers of people who worked in the RF offices of transnational companies that relocated, along with their personnel, to other countries. These people had some social guarantees, had experience of work for a TNC, and could rely on their companies' support. People emigrating in the newest waves lack these opportunities.
- The large-scale arrival of migrants in countries with relatively weak infrastructure and limited economic capacity (the states of the Baltic, the Transcaucasus, and Central Asia) has put significant pressure on these states' economies and labor markets. Successive waves of migrants will therefore increasingly encounter competition, economic hardship, and negative public attitudes.

While there exist huge discrepancies in the estimates of migration flows made by various entities—both governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations—in Russia as well as the receiving states, it is clear that the most recent flow has been much larger than the one in the first half of 2022. The most frequently cited figure is on the order of 700,000 people.[12] How-

12 See, for instance, "Forbes: posle ob"iavleniia mobilizatsii Rossiiu pokinuli primerno 700 tys. chelovek," Kommersant, October 4, 2022, https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/5594533.

ever, a major problem is that most estimates rely on the statistical data of the national border guard services, which report the number of border crossings in a particular period of time without accounting for repeat crossings, return migration, movement to the third countries, "shuttle" activities, irregular migration, etc.[13] Because of these limitations, it is likely that the overall number of migrants in the "second wave" is currently in the range of 350,000–450,000. Thus the overall number of migrants who have left the RF in the two urgent and chaotic waves of 2022 can be estimated at about 500,000. Even this figure represents a substantial potential loss for a country—particularly one like Russia that was already experiencing population decline.[14] It is an especial concern considering the skewed gender, age, and qualification structure of those currently leaving the RF.

While these factors represent some very important arguments for putting an immediate end to the military action, it is clear that demographic, labor market, and socio-economic considerations are of minor significance for Vladimir Putin. More than that, following Alexander Lukashenka's example in Belarus following the protests there in 2020, the RF leadership could perceive the current migration outflows as politically useful, ridding it of opponents to the war and regime and further weakening the country's civil society. Thus, the disastrous 2022 policies might continue, aggravating both the domestic socio-economic situation and the RF's position in the world.

About the Author

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Table 1: Russian R&D Dynamics, 1992–2019

	1992	2000	2010	2015	2019
Personnel	1,532,600	887,729	736,540	738,900	682,464
Researchers	804,000	425,954	368,915	379,400	348,221
Research expenditures, % of federal budget	2.43	1.69	2.35	2.81	2.69
Research expenditures, % of GDP	0.50	0.24	0.51	0.53	0.44

Source: Federal'naia sluzhba gosudarstvennoi statistiki, "Rossiia v Tsifrakh—2020," 2021, https://gks.ru/bgd/regl/b20_11/Main.htm*; Federal'naia sluzhba gosudarstvennoi statistiki, Rossiiskii Statisticheskii ezhegodnik 2009 (Moscow, 2009), 543, 553; Federal'naia sluzhba gosudarstvennoi statistiki, Rossiiskii Statisticheskii ezhegodnik 2020 (Moscow, 2020), 495–6,* https://rosstat.gov.ru/storage/mediabank/Ejegodnik_2020.pdf*; Gosudarstvennyi komitet Rossiiskoi Federatsii po statistike, Rossiiskii Statisticheskii ezhegodnik 2003 (Moscow, 2003), 531.*

13 For example, the Interior Ministry of Kazakhstan reported at the beginning of October that in the wake of the mobilization announcement by Vladimir Putin on September 21, 2022, more than 200,000 people had crossed the country's border with Russia, of whom just seven had been deported back to the RF. At the same time, this report noted that 147,000 of them had already left Kazakhstan within a period of less than two weeks. See Mikhail Rodionov, "V Kazakhstan s 21 sentiabria v"ekhali bolee 200 tysiach rossiian. Deportirovali semerykh," Gazeta.ru, October 4 2022, https://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2022/10/04/15571807.shtml.

14 In 2019, the fertility rate in Russia was 1.504. See Federal'naia sluzhba gosudarstvennoi statistiki, "Rossiia v Tsifrakh—2020;" Federal'naia sluzhba gosudarstvennoi statistiki, Rossiiskii Statisticheskii ezhegodnik 2020, 103.

ANALYSIS

Relocation from Russia to Georgia: Environmentalists in Exile

By Maria Tysiachniouk and Arsenii Konnov (University of Eastern Finland)

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Abstract

This analytical review is dedicated to Russian civil society in exile in Georgia, an ongoing story of relocation due to internal repressions in Russia, laws affecting NGOs and freedom of speech, the war in Ukraine, and the military draft in Russia. We briefly highlight the whole range of Russian relocants' activities in Georgia, yet focus in depth on environmental activism. Based on our informants' environmental biographies in Russia and in Georgia, we determine and highlight activists' categories, as well as analyzing their motivations and repertoire of collective action.

Historical/Political Context in Russia

The authoritarian trends and pressure on Russian civil society that started in the early 2000s, when Pulin came to power, have accelerated dramatically since 2014 (with the annexation of Crimea and conflict in the Donbas region), and especially in 2022, in the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. These events have become powerful triggers for relocation (many Russians use the term "relocation" instead of "emigration," as they often do not yet know whether their departure from Russia will be permanent and/or in what country they will settle). In February–March 2022, around 200,000 people left the country, and with the announcement of the military draft in September, a hundred thousand more followed (Stoner 2022, Kuleshova et al. 2022, Zavadskaya 2022, Arkhipova 2022) (see Figure 1).

"Relocants" include political emigrants, Putin regime dissidents, individuals, and NGOs and independent media facing repression. Of these, many have settled in Georgia. On the one hand, the organizational and political environ-

Figure 1: Relocants at the Verhnii Lars Crossing Point on the Russian–Georgian Border

Artist: Ivan Sotnikov Jr.—relocated to Georgia; curator: Alexandra Orlova

ment in Georgia is much more liberal than in Russia. On the other hand, adaptation is still a challenge for Russian civil activists due to cultural and language barriers, the mixed reception of Russians in Georgia, and differences in social and political agendas between the two countries.

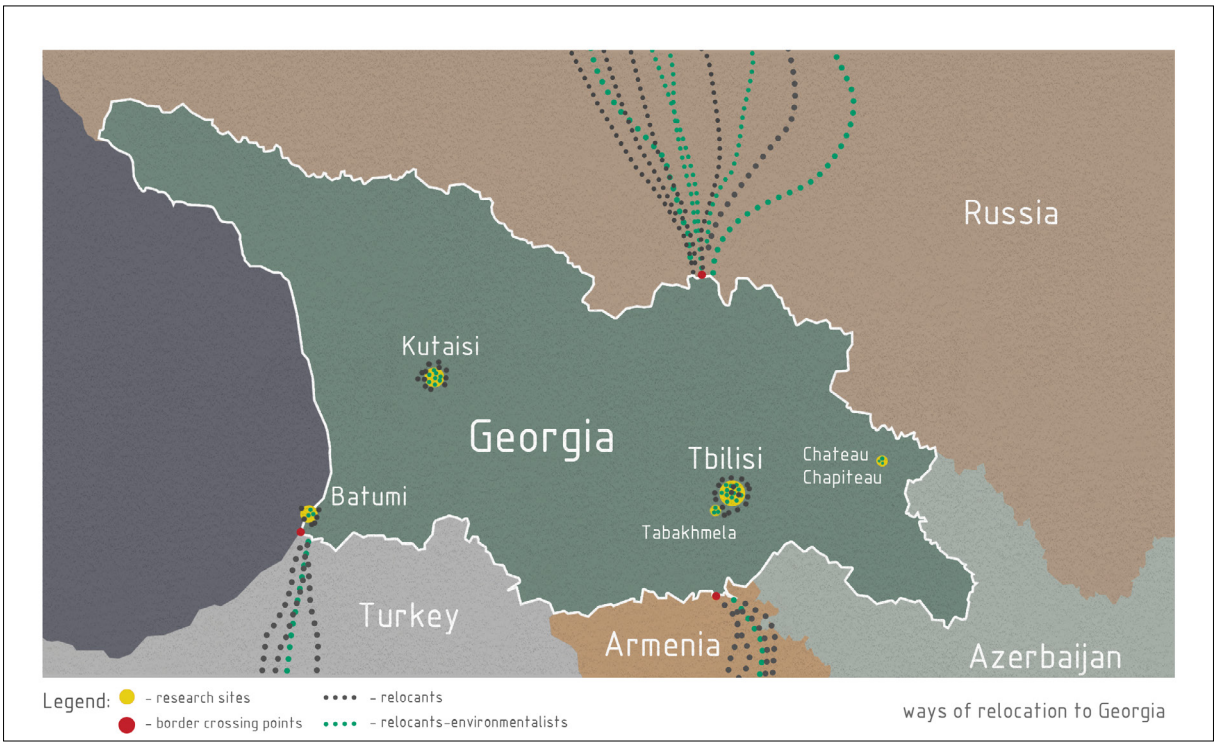
Research Questions:

How and why have relocated Russians continued to pursue their environmental activism in Georgia?

How is environmental activism situated within the broader spectrum of social activism practiced by Russian relocants?

There are a few publications on how activists attempt to influence Russia's environmental situation from exile (Henry and Plantan 2022). The focus of this analysis is slightly different: we analyze activism not from, but in, exile in Georgia. Findings are based on 20 biographical interviews with environmentalists, conducted in August–October 2022 in Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Batumi, and two rural settlements in Georgia (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Research Map of Georgia: Research Sites and Border Crossing Points



Designer: Renata Tysiachniuk; curator: Alexandra Orlova

Characteristics of Russian Relocant Community in Georgia

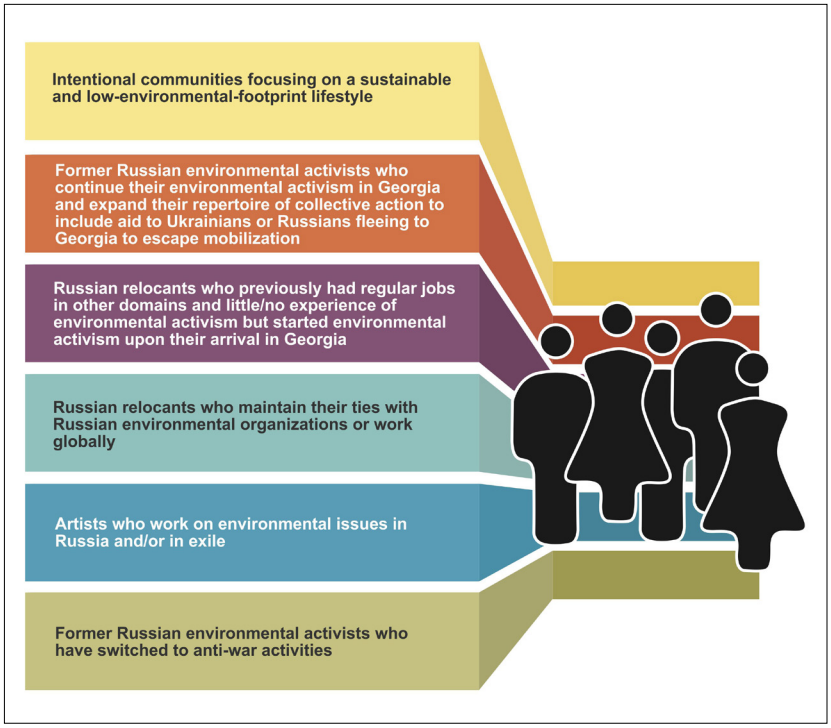
Russian activists have diverse meeting points and local circles (co-living spaces, discussion clubs, expatriate-centric bars, etc.) in Tbilisi, as well as widely known hubs oriented toward political activism (such as Betlemi 23—Emigration for Action) and common events (political rallies and political performances). There are multiple horizontal connections between them. However, as a whole, the relocant community is rather self-centered, with high in-group and low out-group connectivity. Integration is dependent on personal informal connections with Georgians, which are often hard to establish. However, there are some exceptions that involve employing locals in sustainable community-building (Château Chapiteau) or building good relationships with neighbors (Activist Hub). Activists involved in clean-ups and recycling are the most successful at building relationships with Georgian society. They have already managed to establish ties with businesses, including banks (see the discussion of Parki ar Minda and Tbilisi Cleanups below). We identified several categories of relocants (see Figure 3 overleaf).

Types of Environmental Activists in Exile

a) **Intentional communities** focusing on sustainable and low-environmental-footprint lifestyles, which serve as living laboratories for communities in exile, have been founded both before the war (Château Chapiteau, founded in 2021)

and since the war (Activist Hub, founded in May 2022). Château Chapiteau has commercial activity (forest "glamping" and a restaurant in Kakheti region) at its core, but a strong sense of community-building, democratic self-governance, and social and environmental responsibility are explicit parts of its mission. The Château Chapiteau community includes the project team, volunteers, and often guests or shareholders who willingly take part in community life and development. This community positions itself as a driver of local development, employing and supporting local residents. Its environmental agenda includes the preservation of protected wingnut trees on their territory, organizing clean-ups, recycling and upcycling activities, growing a permaculture garden, and providing a locally sourced and mostly vegetarian menu for the team and guests. Château Chapiteau also funds different charity and anti-war initiatives (such as providing accommodation to Ukrainian refugees free of charge) (see Figure 4).

Figure 3: Types of Environmental Activists in Exile



Designer: Sofia Beloshitskaya; curator: Alexandra Orlova

Figure 4: Château Chapiteau Intentional Community

Artist: Renata Tysiachniuk; curator: Alexandra Orlova

Activist Hub is a small community situated in the countryside near Tbilisi that occupies two village houses and a small garden plot. It provides a meeting place and temporary accommodation for activists involved in anti-war and envi-

ronmental projects, as well as an opportunity for "grounding" through nature hikes, creative activities, gardening or doing other daily tasks. The community is partly self-funded (the project team is now working, as part of an international anti-war coalition, on a hotline helping young Russians to avoid the military draft) and operates on a non-commercial basis. It follows its own version of voluntary simplicity principles and is active at the neighborhood level, enjoying a friendly attitude from villagers. At the Activist Hub, an eco-friendly lifestyle takes the form of gardening, recycling and composting, swap parties, and a vegan diet (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Activist Hub Intentional Community

Artist: Renata Tysiachniuk; curator: Alexandra Orlova

b) **Former Russian environmental activists** who continue their environmental activism in Georgia and expand their repertoire of collective action to include aid to Ukrainians or Russians fleeing to Georgia to escape mobilization. For example, a Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) communication employee has continued working online with Forest Etalon (a temporary substitute for FSC-Russia that was established due to the EU sanctions). She has become actively involved in the "Russians in Batumi" network, which has been raising funds for Ukrainian refugees through charitable concerts and other activities. For example, this respondent helped organize a fair with multiple events that aimed to support Ukrainian kids going to school in Batumi. Environmental actions, such as beach clean-ups, take place occasionally.

The NGO Frame, located in Tbilisi, previously worked in Russia in the field of civic education for teachers, focusing mostly on human rights, but also on environmental education (such as the zero-waste lifestyle). Now, Frame is not only helping Russian emigrants to adapt to their new host country by organizing events and lectures, but also raising funds to support Ukrainian refugees. While environmental activism has not been central to Frame's activities in Georgia, the ecological agenda is present in their educational events, such as the "Territory of Freedom" summer camp for civil and political activists, where workshops and discussions on "zero waste" were organized.

c) **Russian relocants who** previously had regular jobs in other domains and little/no experience of environmental activism but **started environmental activism upon their arrival in Georgia**.

It is worth noting that the two most prominent environmental initiatives today (at least in terms of the number of people involved) were organized by Russian emigrants who previously did not consider themselves to be environmental activists. Parki Ar Minda ("I don't want a plastic bag" in Georgian) is a non-profit project that supports the separate collection of waste (operated as an "eco-taxi" service), organizes education events on a wide range of sustainability topics, and conducts team-building eco-activities for corporate partners, especially in the banking sector. This initiative was co-founded by Russian and Georgian partners in 2019 (the Russian co-founder has a background in PR and marketing, not in ecology) and is registered as an NGO.

Tbilisi Clean-Ups, founded in April 2020 by a group of political emigrants from Russia with different backgrounds (IT, marketing, and education), started out as a single local clean-up event whose goal was to establish a community

of environmentally minded activists, as well as to "express gratitude" to Georgia as their new host country. The event brought together over 70 participants and soon became regular. Since then, Parki ar Minda and a number of Georgian environmental activists have partnered with the initiative to organize separate waste collection and promote clean-ups among local residents. The community is active on social media: its Facebook and Instagram accounts, which have several hundred subscribers each, announce their events in Georgian and English, while its Telegram channel, which has over 1,000 subscribers, is mostly in Russian. The community is now expanding its activity beyond Tbilisi (both by organizing clean-ups in other towns or at landmarks and by helping initiative groups outside Tbilisi to organize their own events). The project team has also taken advantage of the skills of its founders to produce a number of IT solutions, such as an interactive map of littered places. The founders of Tbilisi Clean-Ups are in the process of registering the organization as an NGO in order to facilitate communication with private partners and local authorities.

d) **Russian relocants who maintain their ties with Russian environmental organizations** and try to keep up their work, at a global level or in Russia, from abroad. Some of our informants have preserved their ties to activist movements (such as citizen air quality monitoring or zero- waste initiatives) and environmental education programs that still operate in Russia. While staying in touch with their colleagues in Russia, they also play an important role in their social and professional networks, the members of which have relocated or emigrated to different European countries and neighboring countries such as Armenia, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan. They use their contacts in new places to develop or join new projects, mostly in the field of environmental education, that can be implemented online. Georgia itself offers little room for participation in local projects in the field of sustainability at the moment; this is due to language barriers, the specificity of the local environmental agenda (unlike clean-ups or recycling, such sectors of environmental activism as climate action or air quality sensing are under-represented or absent in the local landscape), and the rather pronounced reluctance of Georgian NGOs to work with Russians.

e) **Artists who work on environmental issues in Russia and/or in exile.**
Our informants, most of whom have moved from Russia relatively recently and therefore have had little time to adapt, are actively establishing new ties within the Russian-speaking community in search of new collaborations, while also trying to connect with the local art scene. Still, due to the same problems of language barriers and divergent attitudes toward Russian emigrants that exist elsewhere, their success in this endeavor is modest. Art projects related to ecology have been particularly vulnerable in the context of war; our informants had to postpone or cancel their working plans after February 24 and relocate in a hurry. They have adapted to this situation by finding different applications for their artistic skills, such as teaching art to kids, working online as designers or illustrators, joining socially oriented projects run by expatriates from other countries, or organizing commercial lectures and workshops. Many of them, however, are planning to move elsewhere: they are currently applying for programs or art residencies outside Georgia.

f) **Former Russian environmental activists who have switched to anti-war activities (shelters, etc.) since relocation.**
For example, one informant-activist was involved in Russia in multiple environmental projects, such as the informal educational initiative Eco-Stream, developing a low-carbon-footprint site in a Russian village, and working on the EU project on Climate Adaptation in local communities of the Russian North. In Georgia, she has been working for a charity foundation that has set up a shelter for Ukrainian refugees, as well as helping provide them with valuable information on how to move to Georgia and later relocate to Europe.

Motivations and Self-Organization Practices among Environmental Activists

Emigration motivated many environmental activists to start new projects that would have been difficult to implement in Russia due to the disempowering socio-political context, repressions against activists (including legal restrictions on NGOs), and smear campaigns against independent civil society. Thus, Château Chapiteau organizes its working processes according to the principles of sociocracy, such as decision-making by consent, shared responsibility for their outcomes, and organization in horizontal "circles." Tbilisi Clean-Ups has a horizontal structure that encourages its members to propose and implement new ideas, as well as to organize their own events as soon as they get enough experience as volunteers. Environmental activists show interest in each other's initiatives and support each other by cross-promotion on social media, sharing resources, and attending each other's events. Such solidarity is pronounced among environmental activists. Many of our informants say that they deliberately adhere to democratic and horizontal self-organization principles in order to oppose the anti-democratic ideology of the current Russian political regime and to serve as an alternative image of Russian society. For them, practices of solidarity and self-organization are a conscious response to war and the authoritarianism of the Russian government. At the same time, being mind-

ful of the political and social complications caused by the influx of Russian citizens into Georgia, activists try not to attract too much attention to themselves, instead showing modesty and respect for their host country. As the founder of Tbilisi Clean-Ups says:

> I'm well aware that I don't know the local customs in Georgia. Even if it's merely about eco-activism and clean-ups, it may be considered an intrusion: new people arrive and start doing something that was never done before, disrupting the common way of doing things. In this case, would we be much different from Putin, who invades Ukraine and says that he's going to save people and improve their lives, because it is he who knows better how to do that?

Conclusions

Russian relocants to Georgia represent a wide range of social initiatives, and many of them still have ties to Russian organizations. Within this community, care for the environment is an important value, yet "full-time" environmental activists are few. Many people are making an effort to preserve their eco-friendly lifestyles by joining clean-ups and recycling initiatives, which are still relatively new to Georgia. Others go further, building sustainable, self-governing communities with elements of permaculture and low-carbon lifestyles. Occasionally, environmental activists switch to other types of activism (such as providing help to Ukrainian and Russian refugees), while other immigrants without any background in eco-activism start working on garbage collection and recycling. Leaving Russia was a disruptive and stressful event for most, but it also spurred self-organization and solidarity between those Russian activists who find themselves in a new environment, one that is both challenging (in terms of adaptation and finding new jobs, but also in terms of the tensions caused by Putin's invasion of Ukraine and the simultaneous influx of Russians into Georgia) and empowering (due to Georgia's relatively liberal political environment). The relocants feel thankful to their new host country and see its betterment as an important motive; however, integration into Georgian civil society proves difficult. Nevertheless, environmental activists in exile show good capacity for self-organization: clean-ups involve hundreds of volunteers in Tbilisi and beyond and are used by relocants to establish social ties between themselves. While the long-term outcomes of these activities remain to be seen, the dynamism and mutual support within the community of Russian environmental activists is one of many examples that dispel the widespread myth of Russian civil society's inability to self-organize.

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Arsenii Konnov is an environmentalist and a sociologist. He has graduated from Saint Petersburg State University, Faculty of Biology and Soil Science (2010), and has worked in several NGOs and universities as project manager, Master students tutor, and research assistant. During his career, he studied and taught the subjects of social aspects of sustainable development, urban ecology, sustainable cities and climate adaptation. He is actively involved in environmental sociology research since 2021, and has published several papers on these topics. Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, he moved to Georgia where he continues his research on Russian environmental activists who relocated abroad after the war started. His research is supported by KONE Foundation and the University of Eastern Finland.

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The CSS combines research and policy consultancy and, as such, functions as a bridge between academia and practice. It trains highly qualified junior researchers and serves as a point of contact and information for the interested public.

The Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies, The Elliott School of International Affairs, The George Washington University
The Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies is home to a Master's program in European and Eurasian Studies, faculty members from political science, history, economics, sociology, anthropology, language and literature, and other fields, visiting scholars from around the world, research associates, graduate student fellows, and a rich assortment of brown bag lunches, seminars, public lectures, and conferences.

The Center for Eastern European Studies (CEES) at the University of Zurich
The Center for Eastern European Studies (CEES) at the University of Zurich is a center of excellence for Russian, Eastern European and Eurasian studies. It offers expertise in research, teaching and consultancy. The CEES is the University's hub for interdisciplinary and contemporary studies of a vast region, comprising the former socialist states of Eastern Europe and the countries of the post-Soviet space. As an independent academic institution, the CEES provides expertise for decision makers in politics and in the field of the economy. It serves as a link between academia and practitioners and as a point of contact and reference for the media and the wider public.

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