Mobile entrepreneurs in post-Soviet Central Asia

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Abstract

In this paper I present an analysis of a mobile entrepreneur and his transnational economic activities in post-Soviet space. I argue that the space of informal economic activities of mobile entrepreneurs are structured by trust-networks in the sense Tilly (2005) uses it. In this context the concept of tirikchilik (an Uzbek term for 'muddling through' or survival) which defines the space of informal economic activities is important to decipher. Tirikchilik unifies various economic activities which vary from trade, service delivery, middleman services, administration and any kind of activity that generates some cash.

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1. Introduction

‘At the end of July, Moscow police opened a massive campaign in Russia’s capital against irregular migrants, sweeping through street markets and other places where many migrants gather, and detaining people based on their non-Slavic appearance. According to media reports, over 4000 people have been taken into custody, including nationals of Vietnam, Syria, Afghanistan, Egypt, Morocco, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan.’ (Human Rights Watch August 9, 2013) http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/08/08/russia-mass-detention-migrants.

The newspapers that described the events of summer 2013 reported inhumane actions towards migrants in Russia performed by the Russian government and security services. These reports of human rights violations on a mass level continued until the end of August 2013. The raids on migrants happened mainly in the capital city of Moscow and St. Petersburg. In other parts of Russia there were one or two reports of informal raids of markets by youth gangs and other groupings of ethnic Russians against migrants. This sudden splash of violence was not expected, at least not in the form it took last summer (2013) in Moscow where thousands of migrants have been detained in temporary camps without electricity, no communications, appalling sanitation conditions, inadequate food, and lack of access to potable water. The reports bluntly called these camps concentration camps where crowds of people were herded without any correlation between the number of detainees, sizes of tents and number of beds available.

These events, initially taking place in Moscow and St. Petersburg, have produced chain reaction effect which continued in other big cities of Russia. They have marked a major turn in migration policy of Russia, reflecting certain attitudes towards migrants and migration on the side of both the government and the local population. It also escalated the already existing xenophobic attitudes and Nazi movements among the Russians. There is still large portions of migrants residing in the suburban regions of Russia who, most probably, do not face such a direct violence on a mass scale. Nevertheless, those migrants who work in bigger cities and face violence still need to redefine their strategies and either change their locations, moving to suburban regions of Russia, or just to return home. Now there are more restrictions on general mobility within the country, particularly on entrance into the country. However, it will take more time to figure out directions for migrants’ strategies and regulations needed to implement political changes. Therefore, at this point it is difficult to say whether these changes have already influenced the patterns of survival strategies described here. The practices detailed in this paper have been established over a long period of time after a crash of the Soviet Union and its social security system, which marked the
The independence of the Central Asian states in 1991 was almost immediately followed by internal economic crises which left many people without hope for survival inside their own countries. Soviet welfare system ceased to exist and employment market became less attractive, since the average state salaries dropped below the subsistence minimum. Provision of the citizens was taken up by kinship and friendship networks of support. Consequently, citizens put more values and efforts to reciprocate those networks of support and avoided the state and its structures. Security became a number one preoccupation of ordinary people which they themselves called tirikchilik (an Uzbek term for ‘muddling through’, ‘making ends meet’). The term tirikchilik refers to economic activities of any person who is not on davlat ishinda (‘state employment’) which includes private businesses of any kind, formal and informal.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union able-bodied people have set into motion for search of employment and moved out of their homes. Russia was one of the most developed states and was also a visa free zone for the citizens of the former Soviet Union which made it attractive for most of the labour migrants from Central Asia. The only barrier for those migrants was/is the propiska regime (local registration) – a heritage of the Soviet state (L’yubarskiy, 1994). Propiska entitles its holder to social welfare and other benefits, while its absence throws a person out of the realm of state provisions and welfare support, in other words this person becomes illegal (Turaeva, 2012). This applies often to mobile entrepreneurs who end up operating ‘illegally’ without a registration at their new place of residence. These circumstances, coupled with new economic challenges, contribute to the formation of informal economic niches and economic networks of trust.

The paper aims to decipher practices of informal economic activity which is locally known as tirikchilik. By putting the concept of tirikchilik at the centre, I consciously transcend the boundaries between the ‘first’ and “second” or “formal” and “informal” economies (Cassel and Cichy, 1986; Tanzi, 1980; Tokman, 1992; Tripp, 1997; Paciotti and Mulder, 2004; Lindley, 2005; Little, 2003; Reno, 2000; Duffield, 2001; Roitman, 2004; Meagher, 2010; Lund, 2007). Rasanyagam (2002) has already argued that in post-Soviet Uzbekistan economic activities of any kind that generate income cannot be categorised with simple dichotomies such as formal and informal. Rasanyagam (2011:681) states that post-Soviet period was characterised by ‘general informalisation of state, society and lifeworlds following the collapse of the Soviet Union’ and ‘informal economic activity is just one expression of it’. Informal economic activities cannot be understood in relation to a formal economy as it ‘does not emerge from and exist in relation to formal political and economic structures’ (Rasanyagam, 2011:682).

I argue that informal economic activities of mobile entrepreneurs constitute an order locally known under the term of tirikchilik. Focusing on the constitution of this space I consciously avoid the trap of finding boundaries between formal and informal economies or definition of what is legal and what is illegal. Instead I reconstruct trust networks (Tilly, 2004) within which mobile entrepreneurs establish, what I call, micro-orders of tirikchilik. Mobile entrepreneurs negotiate between the limits of legal and illegal and operate within and across formal and informal fields of local and transnational economies. The tirikchilik orders are defined by their own norms and social order which go beyond the national boundaries of a single country. These norms and forms of order are influenced by kinship, friendship and other relations of power and dependence. The authority to regulate this space derives from the status held within these trust networks and the rules are enforced by means of obligations, duties, dependencies and other shared beliefs.

The data used for this paper was mainly collected from all Central Asian states excluding Tajikistan, while based in Uzbekistan during 2005–2006. Informal conversations during a short stay in Moscow as well as interviews in Central Asia (Uzbekistan, Kirgizistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan) with mobile entrepreneurs who had visited not only Russia but also Kirgizistan and Kazakhstan complemented the material used for this article. Most of the interviewed were ethnic Uzbeks who

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1 I have not initially referred to Lindblom’s theory of ‘muddling through’ when describing the practices of tirikchilik. ‘Muddling through’ was more a translation of the emic term rather than analysis in terms of ‘muddling through’ theory of Lindblom (1959). However, after studying Lindblom’s model of decision making processes with ‘muddling through’ approach, these are in fact similar principles which mobile entrepreneurs follow when making their decisions. The basic rule of ‘muddling through,’ according to Lindblom (ibid), is to make choices not according to the designated rules but rather pragmatically compare the means and desirable ends, not necessarily the outcome. The strategies employed during this kind of decision making are always adapted to the current context and environment and not necessarily to prescribed rules. The term used by Lindblom ‘muddle through’ refers to the incremental character of the choices taken by public administrators. In the eyes of those who have to find somehow their ways in making right choices, in this particular case, economic choices, the entrepreneurs whom I describe in this paper call it as a way to survive under the current conditions.

2 Hill 2004; Mansoor and Quillin 2006; Kursad 2008; Isabaeva 2011 studied Central Asian migration in Russia. Russia is now the number two among all migrant receiving countries in the world, and Central Asia is one of the regions which economy depends increasingly on remittances sent from abroad (IOM, 2005:397).

3 Different terms are though used by non-Uzbeks with the similar meaning which varies from nation to nation. For example the most frequent term used by Kazakhs, Kyrgyz and Uzbeks from Turkmenistan, with the similar meaning was biznes (‘which I have at least encountered during my informal enquiries about the occupation and sources of income from those who were relatively mobile and did not have a permanent working place ‘at home’).
travelled within Uzbekistan, to Russia, Kazakhstan and Kirgizstan and Uzbeks living in Turkmenistan who also travelled to Russia.

The paper is structured in the following manner. I will start the analysis with introducing the reader to the domain of tirikchilik. Furthermore, I will present those who muddle through this domain, namely mobile entrepreneurs. Then I will go on to describe their working ethics and trust networks followed by a brief note on changing structures of their family and kinship. Finally, I will turn to the institutions which regulate micro-orders within the domain of tirikchilik. I will conclude the paper with the summary of the main points of my argument.

2. Informal economic orders of tirikchilik

There is a large body of literature on informal economies and informal societies which has mushroomed starting from 70s and up till now. There were always two opposite camps dividing this body of literature, namely positive views and optimistic accounts and negative views with pessimistic accounts be it on informal economies, states or social networks (Cassel and Cichy, 1986; Tanzi, 1980; Tokman, 1992; Tripp, 1997; Paciotti and Borgerhoff Mulder, 2004; Lindley, 2005; Little, 2003; Reno, 2000; Duffield, 2001; Rotman, 2004; Meagher, 2010; Lund, 2007). There is a whole segment of literature on post-socialist informal economies which considers the peculiarities of the socialist past as impacts on the current forms of economic activities (Johnson et al., 1997; Kurkchiyan, 2000; Rodgers and Williams, 2009). I would argue that the patterns and complexities within the trust networks which structure the space of tirikchilik is at the same time similar to the practices elsewhere as well as unique in its own right. The latter fact is based on the historical trajectories of the given region with its particularities of established institutions, values and attitudes as well as traditional observations and institutional set up of the given context.

Below I will introduce a particular type of informal economic orders where entrepreneurs of post-Soviet economic space make their living and ensure their economic wellbeing. The institution of Tirikchilik includes economic activities outside of the state system. The phenomena of second (shadow) economies or economies besides the state are not new and they also existed in Soviet times in Central Asia and other socialist and/or Soviet republics (Grossman, 1977; Treml and Alxeev, 1994; Humphrey, 1998; Kotkin, 1995). These were not included in the central government planning (Portes and Böröcz, 1988). After the collapse of the USSR intensity of informal economic activities has increased dramatically and employment patterns drastically changed. Security and survival strategies became more imperative than the search for employment itself. Markus Kaiser (1997:16) quotes one Uzbek informant:

I hate this bazaar. I only do it to survive, for the money. It is after all impossible to live if you do not have any datcha or do not run a business. Look, 60% of the people at the market belong to the intelligentsia. With the wages they earn, one just cannot live (Fatkhulla, 35, Uzbek).

There are various categories of employment to be found in Uzbekistan today and I will briefly define them here, in order to explain the peculiarities of incentives the job seekers have in general in Uzbekistan which might also resemble other settings in other low-income countries, such as Latin America or Horn of Africa (Raeymaekers et al., 2008; Hansen and Vaa, 2004; Maloney, 2004; Chen, 2006).

Basically there are three categories of occupations people usually define in terms of the real income they bring, and hence their popularity and desirability. These categories are: the state jobs; state jobs that can bring additional income and biznes (business). The first category includes jobs within the state owned organizations and government and is locally termed as davlat lishi, which literary means ‘state work’. In this category we can find people who work within governmental administration, and perform jobs of secretaries, accountants, pity administrators and so on. This category of jobs is often understood as financially unreliable and people are employed here solely for the purpose of trudovoy yurishi uchun (so that the work-book runs)\(^4\) in order to ensure one’s entitlement for retirement, although pensions are not higher than average salaries.

The second category of employment also runs within the governmental agencies. The employment in this category includes such professionals as doctors, policemen, prosecutors, tax collectors and others. Their jobs do not pay well but there is a steady extra income from extra payments. The holders of these professions are allowed ( unofficially though) to perform some services outside of their places of employment, or sometimes even get additional income without performing additional work. This category also includes state employment in higher echelons of government and also jobs within international NGOs where the latter pays comparatively high salaries.

The third category of jobs which earns some cash and sometimes good income are pooled together under the term biznes. Biznes is the most desirable occupation and includes but not limited to trade, middleman services and the like. Usually biznesmen (businessman) such as small scale, big scale traders, suppliers of different kinds, among others, are believed always to have money (pri dengah).

\(^4\) Trudovoy is adapted local Uzbek version of Trudovaya knyjka from Russian ‘a work book’. The ‘work book’ is a small brochure-like document with many pages where citizens’ work places are registered. On each page of employment record there are two stamps for the records of acceptance to the job and another stamp is for the records on the release from the job with the clear indication of dates the person worked at this place and the reasons of his/her release. This official document is necessary for claiming the state’s pension later. It is recommended that there are no intervals in the employment records.
The above mentioned category of employment under local name biznes could fall under the economic activities performed within the domain of tirikchilik. The economic activities under the category of tirikchilik take place within the realm of both formal and informal spheres. Tirikchilik has similar properties as the term “incivisme fiscal” by Roitman (2005:5) who described this movement as “’uncivil’ fiscal practice” containing of “civil disobedience […] the refusal to pay taxes” (emphasis is in original).

Actors involved in tirikchilik usually straddle various boundaries between the formal and informal economies, legal and illegal spheres, as well as national and international markets. They establish local and transnational networks. MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga (2000:3), who worked on transnational traders between Africa and Europe, found that those making money at the margins of the law contest boundaries of various kinds: spatial, legal and institutional. This kind of boundary contestation is also important in the case of Central Asians in Russia who are involved in tirikchilik.

As a result of these activities new social norms and rules have been created and institutionalized through the routinisation of their practice and maintenance of migrants’ relations within the established trust networks (Tilly, 2004, 2005) based on various attributes and feelings of belonging.5 In this context the relations based on friendship and kinship overlap or crosscut formal and informal spheres. Tirikchilik has similar properties as the term "incivisme fiscal" by Roitman (2005:5) who described this movement as “’uncivil’ fiscal practice” containing of “civil disobedience […] the refusal to pay taxes” (emphasis is in original).

Below I will present two case studies of two different entrepreneurs who operate in Moscow (Russia) and Chimkent (Kazakhstan). These entrepreneurs generate their income as a result of their mobility, or as one of my informants phrased it, "one should move to get the apple from the tree. The apple does not fall into the mouth of the one who sits under the tree." Another informant said that “motion brings the money without moving one cannot earn today.”

3. Mobile entrepreneurs or those engaged with tirikchilik: urban entrepreneurs and Mardikors6

Madrahim is 26 years old and already has created a wide network both in Moscow and at home in Urgench, Uzbekistan. He assembles construction teams from home and brings them to countryside near Moscow where he has several connections to friends who migrated to Russia earlier. They provide information and connections for new construction projects for him. Madrahim’s services for construction workers include, but not limited to, organization of cheap accommodations, local propiska in the flats owned by his Central Asian comrades and local friends whom he has met during the seven years of engagement in different occupations (labourer, construction worker, middle-man, team leader) between Russia and Uzbekistan. He came as a construction worker himself to Russia with his brother who had already worked there for three years by then. Now his brother is in the team of the organization of construction team himself. He is responsible mainly for propiskas and local arrangements, such as food and local transportation to a construction site. Madrahim hires the team at home and travels with them to Russia in a bus. He brings them to the prearranged accommodations that usually house up to ten persons in a very small room. Team members are advised not to appear without necessity in front of police. Propiskas are usually not ‘clean’ (fake)7 therefore one of the safety rules is to avoid extra police checks. There are commonly accepted rules of staying safe whilst travelling, living and working in Russia. The rules are established as a result of prior experiences by others who then share and update this valuable knowledge which is then passed over to others who are newly arrived to Russia.

There are no official or formal contracts signed within the whole operation of hiring, organizing construction teams neither in Uzbekistan nor in Russia. All the contacts used within the whole operations are established over a long time and are based on trust. As Madrahim stated, “In our work nothing can be achieved without trust. In our work, in general, be it concern for money, documents or the work itself, without trustworthy persons nothing can be accomplished” (Interviews, Tashkent, November 2005).

Migrants and mobile entrepreneurs both in Central Asia and in Russia organize their social lives alongside with their economic activities within their established networks where various relations crosscut and overlap. Another example of assembling a construction team in Uzbekistan and working in Kazakhstan (Chimkent) shows these patterns.

Husan is involved in organizing construction team wherever the work comes up, be it in Uzbekistan, Russia or Kazakhstan. He said sometimes there was so much going on that he could not manage alone and had to organize more help in leading the teams. He mentioned that sometimes his ‘friends’ (jorala, danishla) from Chimkent, or St. Petersburg or Moscow even would call and ask him to assemble a team for renovating or building houses (Turaeva, 2010). He gets a rough list of the requested construction specialists and the requested number of unskilled or ‘black’ workers (chyornorabochiy) for the project. In his construction teams often kinship and friendship ties crosscut and overlap. The agreements and transactions made by Husan are mainly based on trust, obligations, stemming from various dependencies, and partly religious beliefs. Previously

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5 I will come back to the term ‘trust networks’ and its definition later in this paper.

6 Manual laborers, or unskilled workers, chyornorabochiy.

7 There are different types of documents which are not faked or faked: well faked and genuine. The term ‘clean’ document is used to indicate the genuineness of the documents. This discourse has been very well situated in the study of Reeves (2007).
established trust networks and kinship ties play crucial role in the work of Husan; sometimes he has to hire a young inexperienced kin member whose parents have special agreements with Husan’s parents. At the final destination he has his friends and their local connections which he uses to minimize expenses for accommodation and their propiskas. The relations within these networks are based on varying reciprocities and dependencies.

Both Husan and Madrahim make good profits from maintaining close contact with relatives and friends at ‘home’ and new acquaintances at a new location of their residence. Husan easily finds and creates opportunities for those at home during his frequent visits there. He comes up with projects to create new jobs which widen the network of his clients, who are always ready to reimburse him in various forms, for example, as part of the client’s (construction workers under Madrahim) salary at a new working place and with different services and favours. Husan’s status back at home is very important as a future safeguard and secure place in case of return. In the following passage I will provide some examples of those who work in Tashkent as mardikors without propiska. These examples show similar patterns of arranging working stays without a proper registration and therefore applying similar rules for establishing rules and trust networks for work. This domain of economic activities is also referred as tirikchilik. Below is the story of a young man who came from a village not far from Tashkent. He is 19 years old, the youngest child in a family of eight, and his parents are retired.

I came to Tashkent to find job, to experience life and learn how to live on my own. Of course the main reason for coming to Tashkent is tirikchilik. I finished 9 years of secondary school in my village. I have two brothers and three sisters. I am the youngest in the family and all my brothers and sisters are married and live separately. I have two kennoim (wives of his brothers) living with my parents. Both of my brothers are in Russia (Rossiyada). They were sending money and we were living on the money they sent to us. But lately they had some difficulties and had to pay for something there. We are in great need and I am the only one to ‘find money’ (pul topish). So I came to Tashkent for mardikorochilik [manual labourer]. I joined other men from our village and we are jointly renting a one room flat where another three men, who are friends of our village men, are also working as mardikors. We all stand in Yunusobod but it is not a very good one. That stand was agreed with the boss who controls the stand. My friends knew of and agreed on a reasonable payment for it. We have often trouble with police as they catch us and ask for our propiska. The fine is too much for us and we often have to run away when the police come. If we are lucky and hired for not only one day’s work but several days we can get our food in the house of the employer. Otherwise we have to stand on the point until we are not hired without lunch break. We cook in the evenings together. We do not file papers for our propiska as it is very expensive and time consuming and it is not worth it. We would rather go home in the worst case. We try not to be caught by the police and stay always alert. It is difficult at the very beginning, when you are new to Tashkent and do not know the rules of how not to be caught by police (Interviews, Tashkent, February 2006).

Mardikors make almost the main population of migrants who work and live ‘illegally’ in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Mardikor has become a common profession and is ranked as the lowest and the last work one can ever do in Uzbekistan. Mardikor ‘bazaars’ have increased in numbers of their locations. One can easily locate them. They usually look like a small gathering of men of working age standing mainly at the road so that cars can stop. Mardikors are self-organized group of mobile workers who come from different regions to the centre. Their organization and administration has been shaped during many years and its rules of conduct, organization, social norms and other rules became a common knowledge for everybody; both clients and the workers themselves. This group has several standing places in the city which is also known to the clients, there are shared rules of dos and don’ts among those engaged. Sometimes there are also middlemen or brokers (posredniki) who offer well organized and safe work and who, in their turn, also make their money on that. I believe that there are informal taxes paid to the ‘owners’ of the standing spots of mardikors who might also take care of the police raids of those spots.

There is an obvious pattern observed in all of these various transactions and interactions. This pattern is made of the ways the social, as well as business, contacts are established in connection to home and a new place of temporary or long-term residence. The trust, kinship relations, ethnicity and religion play an important role. There are established migrants both in Russia and Central Asia who provide certain kind of services for their kin members, friends, co-ethnics and simply zemlyaki. The services might include cheap accommodation, propiska, employment and some sort of social security. These and other services are institutionalized in various formats from ‘formal’ organizations to informal institutions and networks. Certain actors and leaders play crucial roles in creating those institutions and networks as well as maintaining them.

Mobile entrepreneurs can be compared to African traders who are involved in transnational economic activities between Africa and Europe. MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga (2000:12–13), referring to Powell (1990:301-4), defined the networks of African traders between Africa and Europe as being constituted by exchange transactions which are not easily measured and which occur “through actions of individuals engaged in ‘reciprocal, preferential, initially supportive actions”’. Such “forms of exchange involve indefinite, sequential transactions within a general pattern of interaction, sanctioned by normative rather than legal means” (ibid: 13; emphasis added). Jarillo (1988:34-9) emphasizes that within the informal trade networks personal relationships “have all the characteristics of ‘investments’ since there is always a certain ‘asset specificity’ to the know-how of, say, dealing with a given supplier instead of a new one”. These investments are made to build long-term relationships based on mutual trust which is established over time. Trust is constitutive for societies. It is the basis for any kind of solidarity and cooperation (Lewis and Weigert, 1985: 968; Gambetta, 2008: 215, 219). The behavioural aspect of trust is that it underlies

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8 A district of Tashkent city, where illegal migrants assemble together and wait to be hired for a day job. The interviewee calls this place a “stand.”
9 Zemlyak is an emic term for a fellow countryman, a person from the same region, country or even village or neighborhood. Zemlyak might become a choice of particular contacts and affiliates, the provision of help, or the development of friendship.

4. Working ethics of mobile entrepreneurs: trust networks

In the light of the absence of legal mechanisms such as contract and other systems of sanctioning the violators, there are other means of regulating and administrating economic activities of mobile entrepreneurs. There are obligations and expectation of moral conduct shared within the trust networks. These include but not limited to trust, loyalty, religious belief, collective identification, kinship obligations and other duties and responsibilities perceived and followed by mobile entrepreneurs. All of this play their part in the establishment of, what Tilly called, collective identification (Tilly (2005) develops this term further in connection to democratization processes of modern societies).

Working ethics of mobile entrepreneurs are trust networks as those consisting of “ramified interpersonal connections within which people set valued, consequential, long-term resources and enterprises at risk to the malfeasance of others.” Within these trust networks “[t]rust relationships include those in which people regularly take such risks” as malfeasance of others. According to him “trust consists of placing valued outcomes at risk to others’ malfeasance” (Tilly ibid: 4). Another property of trust established by Muldrew (1998) is that it is an inseparable part of social relations in general. Muldrew (ibid) emphasized the importance of such ties as kinship, neighbourhood, religious affiliation particularly in informal economic activities involving risky transactions. He also emphasised the value of gaining trust and status within trust networks of economic activities in order to make profits and survive.

The relationships within such trust networks are not always newly established and often had been formed over a longer period of time (Granovetter, 1973). Seligman (1997) stated that familiarity is a precondition for trust. Trust for a future member of the network is often defined in terms of personal knowledge of the parents of a trusted member of these networks or personal knowledge (familiarity) about the future candidate. In case a future member for trust networks is recommended by another trusted member of this network, the referee takes the responsibility of taking the risks of malfeasance of the candidate and risk of loosing his (referee) own status as a future referee.

Trust networks are hierarchically structured. The higher the status the more possibilities and chances open for the status holder in terms of economic gain and use of this network. Therefore, maintenance of trust and having a capability to know and understand people is the most important skill for mobile entrepreneurs. They spend considerable time socializing and getting to know important people. Consequently, they master skills of judging people’s behaviour and assessing their values.

One of other criteria for affiliation to the above described trust networks is ethnicity. In African examples from urban studies of ethnicity I find a number of similarities in the social organization of various groups in newly formed cities. Cohen (1974) showed that ethnicity has taken a different form in an urban context. Cohen (1974) even equates an ethnic formation to an interest group which emphasizes the use of ethnicity for specific interests in the context of urban opportunities (Hannerz, 1974; Mitchell, 1974).

Mobile entrepreneurs have managed to make use of ethnic networks and promote ethnic cohesion for economic interests and status advantage. As a result, certain kinds of multifunctional institutions have been created in order to accommodate those interests. There is much work done on the similar issues in urban African studies which considers the role of the elite and their interest in promoting ethnicity and the formation of ethnic groups (Schildkrout, 1974; Lloyd, 1974; Charsley, 1974).

A closer look at the functions of these institutions will reveal that they also fill the gaps of state provisional systems and other structures of state services. This supports very much the statement of Simons (2000:7 cited in Schlee, 2008:16): “The less the state manages to protect and/or provide for all of its citizens, the more people must turn to those they know they can trust.” The same goes for the kinship structures.

5. Kinship patterns of mobile entrepreneurs

Traditional and religious commitments as well as kinship loyalties and nepotism were condemned by the Soviets as perejiti or outlived features, in a negative sense. Increasing numbers of Soviet citizens came to rely on the welfare system, and social security which then undermined kinship loyalties, particularly in urban areas in Central Asia. This brought about a significant challenge to the hierarchal system of local kinship and family networks.

In the post-Soviet period the collapse of the welfare system led to the strengthening of kinship and family ties. The positive result of this was that kinship relations took another meaning than before. Also the ways of maintaining kinship relations changed. Dependencies were lessened through the Soviet social security system; generalized reciprocities within relatives and kin groups took on another character. Reciprocity and mutual aid, the appreciation of kinship ties, and the traditional rites of passages retained some symbolic value.

With the increased paces of mobility and globalisation kinship and other well-established structures such as local traditions and culture faced a considerable challenge and they have been affected by these processes. Particularly kinship networks gained their importance and penetrated into the economic and social lives of mobile entrepreneurs. Family structures and kinship arrangements have also been adapting into the new conditions namely mobile lives of entrepreneurs. Family and kinship relations have taken somewhat different forms and integrated new set of relations into its system.
entrepreneurs have gained a different status within their kinship hierarchy which was different before they started their entrepreneurship. In cases of successful career the entrepreneurs moved a step up in the status ladder and in the cases of failure they moved a step down or even they started to work under those kin members who had become more successful in this business and who had been probably a status lower before.

Another pattern observed within changing family structures is mobile entrepreneurs having two different families in two different locations. At home a ‘traditional wife’ with children lives and serves his parents. As one entrepreneur, explaining their functions at home said: “...it is difficult to leave parents alone, somebody needs to be there to serve them (hizmat atish garak). It is how to be married in Uzbek families”. The children who live with the first wife and his parents are ‘legal’ (zakonnii) who at the end of the day are real inheritors of the wealth of the father (a mobile entrepreneur). At the locale which is most frequently visited with longer stays, there is another relationship with often a Russian woman. The Russian wife supports him not only emotionally but also provides a certain type of local support. This support is very valuable considering the fact that the woman is not only a ‘lover, second wife’ but also a local entrusted representative and a door-opener to local channels and connections. This might be very crucial during the business activities at this place and often for securing proper documents which could help avoiding much trouble. This quality of the Russian wives is often appreciated at home and in the worst cases (jealousy) they are ignored by the ‘home’ wives of the mobile entrepreneurs. This is often the case when entrepreneurs are successful in their business and bring enough money ‘home’ and also help their kin members to get into this network of economic activities with a good income. The frequent comment on a mobile husband who has another family in Russia made by ‘home’ wives in Uzbekistan was: ‘I do not care what exactly he does in Russia, the main thing he brings money home’. Others were: ‘isn’t it good that a man can afford more than one family when others cannot even afford one?’ and the like. There were few complaints on this issue most of which came from those wives whose husbands did not do so well but still took the second wives in Russia.

6. Mobility and circulation: dynamic geographies of mobile entrepreneurs

Mobile entrepreneurs travel back and forth between Russia and Central Asia for different reasons by different means. The question arises: how the routes of mobile entrepreneurs are established, how their mental geographies are constituted and how the timeframe is imagined. The routes have various distances imagined and physical. Time is an important variable in measuring and establishing both physical and imagined geographies which are lived through various experiences of mobile entrepreneurs. Mobile entrepreneurs mediate between persons, objects, ideas, beliefs, information and time within the domain of tirikchilik. They regulate it and establish micro-orders which enable them to secure this space from uncertainty and disorder. The space where they operate stretches beyond physical boundaries of one state. Border-crossing is an important part in their whole operations which is seen as space of risks. It was described by one frequent travelling entrepreneur as “every time one crosses these borders one sweats out completely [meaning ‘stressed out’]” One of the risks faced upon arrival to a new place of residence is propiska regime. Propiska regime tremendously constrains the movements and spaces of actions of mobile entrepreneurs and predetermines certain actions and behaviour and establishes new rules outside of state regimes.

Mobile entrepreneurs’ movements are structured by their agendas that fix problems, organize things, make agreements, and negotiate prices and conditions, among others. Their social and economic geographies are defined by set of rules, moral conduct, religious and ethnic affiliation, social networks and the locations defined in terms of security, audience and purpose. These routes and maps are in constant change and redefined according to the above criteria and properties. Often these routes and maps were established over a long period of time, through the experiences of living in and learning about the locations, people and different values, as well as opportunities offered by those locales.

Mobile entrepreneurs imagine their work as a chance for making something out of their lives and establish their economic security not only for the present but also for their future. There are two kinds of aims or plans according to traditionally established beliefs about what one should reach in one's lifetime.

One of the main duties of a man in any family is first to build a house, then if you still have money buy a car and of course one must organize the children’s marriages. If you have five sones you need to build each a house only the youngest stays in your house so that to take care of the parents. In case one has more money after accomplishment of the main tasks he buys or builds a holiday house (dacha) in the mountains or near water in the nature for making holidays together with the family and kins. It is good to have a place where you can go with your family and friends to rest and relax.

The immediate plans are, of course, to secure enough money for himself and family, or families, in case he has two. Additionally he makes sure that from time to time (when there is a chance to help) kins are supported financially or by other means. The investments into social capital, such as investing time and money to maintain trust networks, are always important. I use the term ‘social capital’ borrowing from Bourdieu (1985:248) who defined it as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition.”

The duration of this business is imagined as long as business is successful and in case one feels too old, he plans beforehand to integrate his sons and kins into this business in order to secure continuously running business, so that the profit stays within the family and his kin group. This is the most desired scenario because in that case the successful entrepreneur will continue enjoying his efforts even after he got out of his business. This can be compared to securing one’s pension.
7. Institutions of regulation of micro-orders

In this Section 1 will discuss institutions of regulations and the rules applied for the establishment of these institutions. Mobile entrepreneurs whom I describe in this paper establish trust networks. A number of people are involved in the business of a single entrepreneur and there is a considerable amount of cash, mainly in US dollars, that circulates within these activities. Then other questions arise that consider the state structures, taxes, banks, legal administration and registration. It is amazing how many economic activities are going on outside of the state system. All of these should have at least some basic infrastructure and system of regulation, in order to function. Further questions to discuss are: why the state has no interest to make use of this lively economy, and why policies, such as propiska regime, are allowed to push all of this economy into the shadow.

Propiska paradoxically can serve both as a rupture between newcomers and the state and at the same time a connecting link between transnational entrepreneurs and the local administration. The tax system is mostly irrelevant for the economic activities of the mobile entrepreneurs, since the organization of the whole business is based on cash payments without formal contracts. Even propiska, when it is fake, is organized outside of the state system of regulations. Business minded individuals and/or state employees in both Russia and Central Asia make real money without declaring this business, since this operation is illegal. Banking system, in general, is not trusted by people either in Central Asia or by Central Asians in Russia. The reasons were as following: ‘to give your real money to the banks is like to give it voluntarily to a thief, now you have money and tomorrow it is gone and you would never know what have happened to your money and even to the bank itself’.

The economic activities described above are defined by Roitman as “incivisme fiscal.” The latter creates conditions under which mobile economic entrepreneurs establish micro-orders. Micro-orders are formed with principles similar to those described by Lefebvre (2004) which he called “social spaces”. These orders can be compared to what Glick Schiller (1999:97) refers to as ‘social field’ and defines them as being made of ‘sociocentric’ relationships built around ‘social actions, ideas and values of people’ by means of multiple interlocking networks. In discussing space and the principles of its production, I draw on Lefebvre (2004), who advocates bringing together objective and subjective realities, cognitive processes and everyday life in order to bridge the gap between purely subjective or metaphysical definitions of space, on the one hand, and lived experience and practice, on the other hand. For Lefebvre (ibid.: 46), objective reality is “lived” experiences of everyday life. Subjective reality comprises of “perceived” and “conceived” experiences of human ecology. Conceived experiences of subjective reality include external influences of power, ideology and knowledge. Perceived experiences of human subjective realities include the influence of images, memories and symbolic forms of representations. Lefebvre defines spaces as produced and reproduced and as result of interrelationships among various fields within different spaces. In the moments of change there are new spaces produced (Lefebvre, 2004: 46–47).

The existence of multiple legal orders alongside the state legal system has been studied by scholars of legal pluralism (Benda-Beckmann, 1981; von Beckmann et al., 2009; Eckert, 2004). Alternative legal orders in the understanding of these authors vary from legal system established by International NGOs to more local traditional legal orders practiced by traditional authorities (Benda-Beckmann, 1981; Benda-Beckmann et al., 2009; Eckert, 2004). The focus of the research within the field of legal pluralism is mainly on the existing choices of legal systems available for various people and groups, and the motivations behind their choices or references to the legal orders. The formation of micro-orders on the other hand can be analyzed both as a priori process leading to the situation of legal pluralism and as an intentional behaviour and action described in terms of forum shopping11 to borrow from von Beckmann (1981) since there are always alternative legal orders out there.

What are the rules within these micro-orders? The economic activities of mobile entrepreneurs are not officially regulated. Although the boundaries of tirikchilik stretch beyond the borders of one state, mobile entrepreneurs do not make use of transnational system of legal agreements. They have their own systems of rules and regulations that govern their economic and social lives. As I already described above, even local registration (propiska) is often organized outside of the state system of residence registration. The real propiska would cost more money and more trouble (kalla agriq/headache), as my informants explained to me. It is easier for them to use the services of fake propiska providers. “One saves time and money. Of course, one should be careful with the police checks.” (Informal conversation, Tashkent, 2006).

As to other activities and agreements, the hiring is done within home village and among kinship and friendship networks where potential workers are recommended, personally met, where terms of work are discussed, as well as payment for the services, terms related to travelling and other arrangements in Russia. The ways of assembling a construction team going to Kazakhstan were similar to the ones going to Russia. The conditions and some administration details differ but the principles remain the same.

The maintenance of social and economic contacts at home and at a new place of residence has also similar patterns. This includes the importance of one’s status at home and the social capital which generates not only income but also requires some investment.

Trust and religion play crucial role in verbal agreements which replace formal contracts. Informal agreements are enforced by means of obligations and punishment sourced from kinship relations and friendship based on trust or mutual dependencies of various kinds (Turaeva, 2010). Some of the formulations of the rules are often based on religious beliefs. For example, fear of dying with debts is often serves as a safeguard against violators of agreements. There are also regulatory principles stemming from the belief in men’s pride. In the agreements one can often hear promises such as “I give my word of a man”, or “If I do this then I am not a man” which often carry important gender differentiations among Muslim men.

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11 Forum shopping is borrowed from Benda Beckmann (1981) which means basically making use of multiple legal orders in legally plural societies.
The rules within economic and social activities of mobile entrepreneurs are subject to ad hoc change and flexible. They can be negotiated on the spot and depend on changing circumstances. These and other strategies are, of course, not as simple as I describe. There are various variables in play in all of the processes of negotiation, institutionalisation of new rules and relations, status maintenance and formation of trust networks. These are historical institutional development and state formation history in the region, current economic and political development as well as other contextual issues which are directly related to the everyday life arrangements of mobile entrepreneurs both in Russia and Central Asia. This coupled with the trends of globalisation processes shared via communication technologies as well as other traditional means of channelling information and knowledge, establishes frames of ordering or re-ordering of the micro-spaces in which transnational economic entrepreneurs operate and live. The establishment of new institutions and new rules in the context of tirikchilik has implications for novel economic developments of the post-Soviet period.

The rules, order and social norms established by mobile entrepreneurs in transnational space often do not fit into the state legal systems at the places of their operation. However their relation to these legal systems shapes the rules and norms they follow. Djelic and Sahlin-Andersson (2006) writing about regulation and re-ordering of transnational space suggested to look at regulating processes and governance with a new lens which goes beyond state centric understanding of rule making, governance without government and regulation of transnational activities. Therefore, I would suggest to look at the state legal systems from the opposite side, namely with the eyes of those who has to follow or not to follow state laws. This implies that it is not taken for granted that the state introduces its registration policies and then all urban residents will be either within this system, or outside of it. It is rather the opposite view that is more productive for thinking about how these policies shape the actions of those at whom these policies are targeted. Namely, mobile entrepreneurs will negotiate the state legal system in their own terms with their own tools which in turn will play its part in the process of formation of social norms and rules.

These new institutions serve as frames of reference and sources of basic order for transnational entrepreneurs from Central Asia. The mobile entrepreneurs redefine their relations to the state, or several states, as to just one of other actors in the process of their transnational economic activities (Djelic and Sahlin-Andersson, 2006). Within the debate on transnational governance and rule-making, regulation is conceptualized wider than classical definition of it where the latter conceptualization suggests centrality of the state (Baldwin et al., 1998). The authors also remind of de-regulation scholarly discourse which undermine “new age of legalism” (Schmidt, 2004) and state that “we witness both the decline of state-centred control and the rise of an ‘age of legalism’ (Schmidt, 2004).” The authors (Djelic and Sahlin-Anderssen, 2006:6) define ‘transnational regulation’ as “a mode of governance in the sense that it structures, guides and controls human and social interactions beyond, across and within national territories.”

8. Conclusion

In this paper I presented a mobile entrepreneur whose trajectories of economic activities and social life stretches beyond one state boundary. I unpacked the principles of regulating of micro-orders within the domain of tirikchilik and argued that economic entrepreneurs establish their own norms and social order which is influenced by kinship, friendship and relations of trust. Trust networks structure the domain of tirikchilik where different belongings crosscut and overlap. Power, various dependencies, obligations and duties, shared belief and morals, status and authority play important part in the living and muddling through within the domain of tirikchilik and also in regulating micro-orders by mobile entrepreneurs.

Mobile entrepreneurs cross several national boundaries with a minimum reference to the relevant state legal systems making economic gains from their mobile lives. Even the local registration is avoided for the sake of saving extra expenditures. This is succeeded with the help of trust networks. Trust networks make up the composite part of the micro-orders. Modes of regulations within the realm of tirikchilik are mainly based on the duties and responsibilities within these networks.

Theoretically this paper contributes to the debate on transnational space particularly focusing on the regulation of these spaces, which is a new field of enquiry. Scholarly works in this field mainly focus on the community formation, nationalism and ethnicity, transnational networks and other activities which connect a new place of residence with home. There is relatively little discussion about the principles and mechanisms of ordering these transnational spaces. Comparative analysis between alternative legal orders and the state legal system in places would shed considerable light on the similarities and important differences in the ways norms and rules are established and also followed.

References
