

The thesis deals with the phenomenon, sometimes called “Russian infrastructure”, which is created by Russian small and middle entrepreneurs. They are presented here as economic actors in search for business opportunities who make plans and strategies to achieve them. Their economic activities are conceptualized through the immigrant economy concept, which refers to the phenomena of entrepreneurship and employment of ethnic minorities and migrants within networks created by themselves (Nekorjak 2009). Both the hypothesis and the subject is the existence of an immigrant economy defined as a space of social and economic relations based on language and cultural affinity in which Russian immigrant entrepreneurs operate, and on which they depend in their economic activities. The aim is to identify the main characteristics and functioning mechanisms of this immigrant economy. The key questions revolves around the importance of ethnic networks from which migrants receive capital resources, the role of language and sociocultural affinity in economic relations, and finally the effect of structural factors on entrepreneurial strategies, especially the role of growing importance of migration flows from Russia, tourism, international trade and global real estate market.

In conclusion, the thesis proposes conceptualization of immigrant economy as a network consisting of social and economic relations based on language and cultural affinity. In this economy, next to the Russians, migrant groups, such as Ukrainians, Belarusians and other migrants from the post-Soviet states, participate on various levels with different intensity. The specific national background of the migrant is found to be significant especially in the area of informal ethnic networks which Russian migrants use as a source of help and information, for example for preferential procurement contracts, business advice or contacts. However, the economy is not limited by the local or national state economic structures. It connects migrants with their partners, customers and other key business partners around the world, in particular the post-Soviet states. In conclusion it is important to note that the thesis does not attempt to estimate the size of the economic structures under examination, as there are also Russian entrepreneurs who do not participate in such socioeconomic relations choosing to operate in the mainstream economy instead.