

RUSSIANS IN SERBIA: 100 YEARS WITHIN THE PARADIGM OF BALKAN HOSPITALITY

This article presents a socio-anthropological study of the Russian community in Serbia. The Russian presence in the region recently marked its centenary — a milestone that, in a striking parallel, was accompanied by a new influx of migrants from Russia. While providing a brief historical overview of preceding migration waves, the author focuses primarily on the contemporary period of Russian adaptation in Serbia. How many Russians reside in the Balkans now? What factors contribute to the country's appeal? How do they settle and build their lives here? What are their strategies for finding employment and managing economic and housing matters? How do they engage in recreational activities and satisfy their cultural needs? How does the socialization of children unfold? How are Russians perceived by the local population? Methodologically, the study relies on a combination of participant observation, digital anthropology (including chat and blog analysis), and ethnographic interviews. The most compelling excerpts from the respondents' narratives are presented in the article. These empirical data lend a personal dimension to the scholarly narrative, while simultaneously providing a basis for broader theoretical generalizations. In a wider sense, the history of the Russian diaspora helps understand the place and significance of the culture of small ethnic groups, including migrant communities, that find themselves in a foreign environment. The integration of Russians into foreign cultural environments, the preservation of their national and cultural identity and lifestyle, and the transformation of their self-consciousness provide a basis for scholarly conclusions and offer a fertile field for research across various disciplines, including ethnology. Theoretically, shared ancestry, linguistic kinship, and a common religion serve as key drivers for the assimilation of one ethnic group into another in Serbia. Yet, this did not happen with the Russians who arrived a century ago. Whether this will hold true for the current wave of newcomers remains to be seen.

Keywords: *The Balkans, Russians, Serbia, demographic evolution, Complex Identities, integration*

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