Mama, I'm an Immigrant

The influence of Russian Immigrants on the Development of Cultural Sphere of Armenia

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Abstract

After the Russian-Ukrainian war in February 2022 started,
Armenia became a center of attraction for Russian immigrants.
The immigrants involved in different branches of the cultural sphere of Armenia
influence the development of those spheres.

Three immigrant founders of the cultural-related business
tell their stories of migration, life, and work in Armenia,
and the migration expert elaborates on how Armenia welcomes newcomers.

Key words: Migration, Integration, Russian Immigrants, Cultural Influence

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Introduction

It is a dark, tiny, stuffy place. The only source of light is directed to a small stage with black curtains and a single microphone standing in the middle of the scene. In a couple of minutes, someone will go up on the stage. For the following twenty minutes, the person on the stage will talk about their romances, childhood, relationships with their parents, and all the other topics that constitute the life of an ordinary human being. Several dozens of people sitting in this stuffy place will laugh, finding themselves in the stories of a complete stranger. Though the main topic that will be voiced from that tiny stage will, most probably, be migration.

Introduction

Migration is an essential part of a common discourse. However, academic studies and media outlets prioritize the political and economic aspects of migration, leaving social and cultural issues out of the scope of the research. Meanwhile, the mix of cultures caused by migration is an important factor contributing to the development of the country hosting the immigrants.

The project aims to analyze how the Armenian cultural sphere is changing under the influence of Russian immigrants.

Literature Review

- Cultural Shock and Adaptation
- The Issues Russian Immigrants Face
- Social Anchoring Theory
- Pro-Immigrant Sentiments and Cosmopolitanism
- National Identity and Cosmopolitanism
- Immigrant-held Businesses
- Multiculturalism and Post-Soviet States: the notions of "immigrants" versus "colonists"
- The Benefits of Literary Journalism

Research Questions

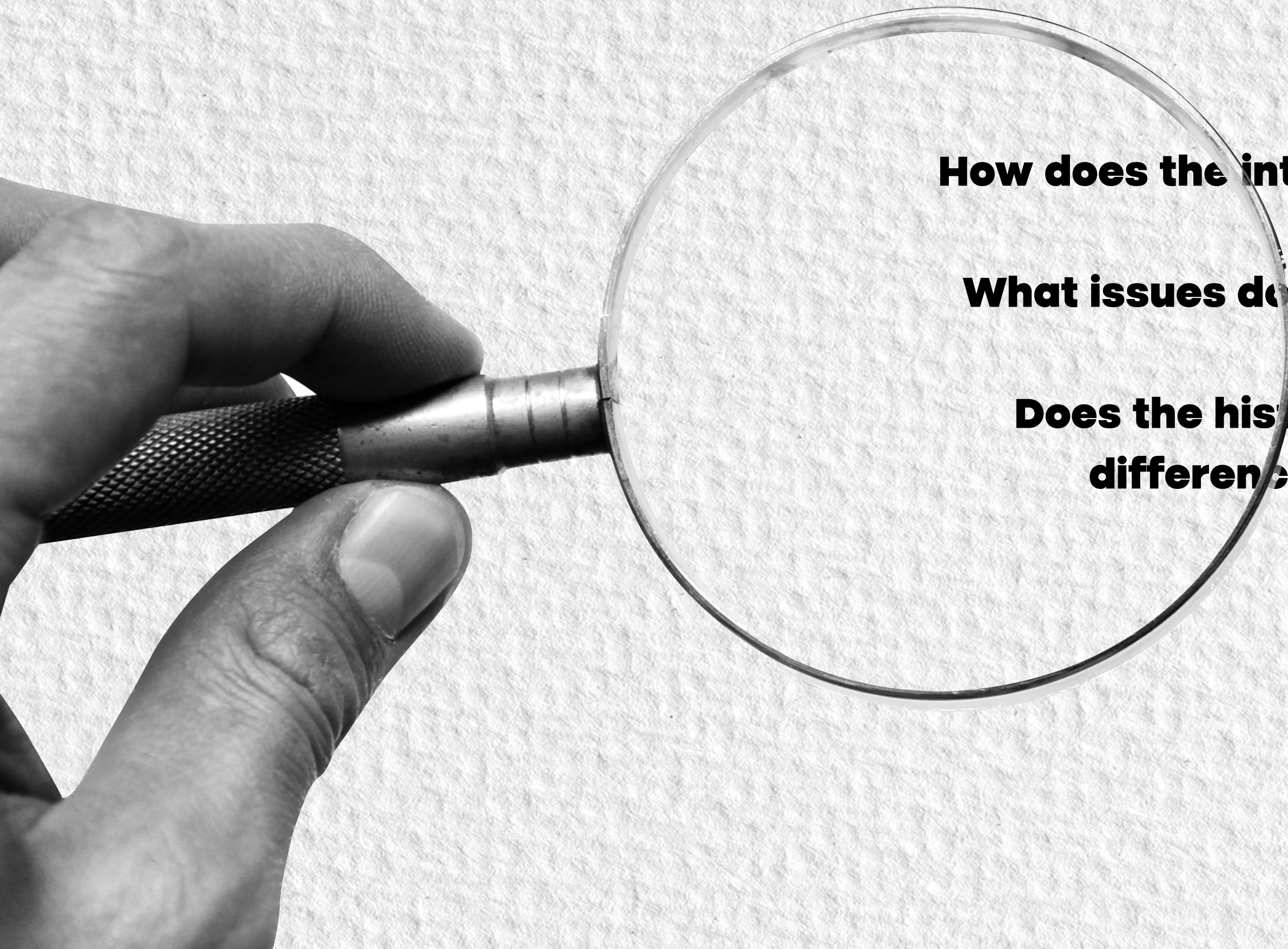The main question the research aims to answer is the following:

How do Russian immigrants, who migrated after February 2022, influence the development of the cultural sphere of Armenia?

Additional research questions:

How does the integration process of Russian immigrants happen in Armenia?

What issues do Russian immigrants face integrating into Armenian society?

Does the historical background of Russia and Armenia, as well as cultural differences, influence the integration process of Russian immigrants?

Methodology

This capstone research is designed by implementing a qualitative research method.
The most effective way to investigate Russian immigrants' influence on the cultural sphere of Armenia
was to explore the lived experiences of the immigrants in Armenia, their work,
and their contribution to the specific branches of Armenia's cultural sphere.

Interviews with Immigrants

The interviewees were selected on the basis of the immigrants' relation to the cultural sphere of Armenia –
visual art, music, and performative art (stand-up).

Interview with a professional in the field of migration

The expert provided a necessary overview and theoretical framework for further analysis.

Observations

Observations were used to understand how the immigrants interact
within their group and with the local population.

Statement of purpose

The starting point of this research was **war**.
When Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022,
thousands of Russians, who did not support the Russian government's actions,
left their country. Many came to Armenia and brought their backgrounds and ideas with them.
As a part of the integration process, Russian immigrants were willing to incorporate those ideas here in Armenia.

However, the project does not aim to assess the matters of the Russian-Ukrainian war;
instead, it focuses on the people who were forced to leave their homes
and brought tangible input to the place they chose as a new residency.

The research is about **people**, their stories,
and what it is like to start it all over again in a new place,
having the desire to create and share it with everyone around.

Reflection on the Process

The fieldwork and analysis identified five major topics relevant to Russian immigrants in Armenia:

- **Migration**: Why did the Russians leave Russia? Why Armenia? Was Armenia prepared?
- **Russia and Armenia**: Relations between the two countries –
differences, similarities, and everything that follows.
- **Integration**: Difficulties with integration – Who? What? Why? And how to deal?
- **Business**: How do culture-related businesses the immigrants open operate?
What do they bring to Armenia?
- **Culture**: How do the immigrants influence Armenia's cultural sphere?
What do they bring? How does it influence them?

The final product of this research is a **literary journalism article.**
The non-fiction narrative overviews the experiences
of the Russian immigrants in Armenia, the issues they faced with the integration,
the businesses they created, and their effect on Armenia's cultural sphere.

Thank you!

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