
Role of Russian shrinking cities in the inter- and intra-urban networks

Vera Efremova*¹

¹Moscow State University (MSU) – Russia

Abstract

Modern urban problems, including population decline, the "shrinkage" of the local labor market, unemployment and the lack of the municipal budget are rooted in the loss of role of these cities in the national, regional and local economy and settlement system. In this regard the research of past and present interurban links as well as internal and external interactions between different actors on city level sheds light on the reasons for the long-term population and economic decline. It also provides a basis for the possible options for future development.

The assessment of such links and networks and the potential for their formation can be done through the lenses of spatial urban development. Basically, there are three main actors that are formed patterns of city structure and the quality of the urban environment:

- Citizens – through housing preferences depending on the stages of family life cycle, income and socio-cultural attitudes,
- Business – through allocation of places of employment and the formation of the travel patterns "home – work",
- National, regional and municipal authorities – through regulation and prioritising some actions in socio-economic and spatial development.

Each of these key actors (stakeholders) is viewed in the context of interlinkages of different social networks.

The population of "weak" cities participates in the long commuting, some citizens ("otkhodniki") work in large cities, economically prosperous regions, but the consumption and investment in the improvement of living conditions are realized in the place of residence. In addition, there is a kind of "reversal" migration of residents of major cities (mostly retirees), often just for the summer period. This process is increasingly affecting the countryside, but it also have impacts on some small and medium-sized cities. Both of these processes have significant manifestations on the urban environment and spatial development. The investigation of the directions of migration flows, regions and cities that attract labour migrants and, on the other hand, places that accept the seasonal migrants, reveals potential for urban transformation under the influence on "external" capital and lifestyles.

Transformation of urban economy, mode of employment and community patterns, the current use of industrial plots play a key role in the spatial development of cities, especially formed and developed as centers of textile manufacturing, coal-mining and metallurgy. The

*Speaker

differences in current spatial development and transformation of industrial zones depend on the role of main agents in the national, regional and local economy. In addition, the former industrial areas are one of resources to attract new economic actors, and in this respect the established cooperation and social contacts of residents, businesses and the local administration are crucial.

The regulation of spatial development is a sum of actions of different levels of public policy including identification of priorities, measures of socio-economic policies that have territorial impacts and the development of territorial planning documents. Analysis of the links between the cities in this aspect involves the issues of attraction companies to develop a master plan or some urban projects, as well as the interaction stakeholders of different levels for prioritising some areas of development.

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