

DANIELA ZUPAN, MARIA GUNKO

# THE COMFORTABLE CITY MODEL: RESEARCHING RUSSIAN URBAN PLANNING AND DESIGN THROUGH POLICY MOBILITIES

**Daniela Zupan**, PhD, Assistant Professor for “European Cities and Urban Heritage”, Bauhaus-Universität, Weimar; Postdoctoral Research Fellow, HSE University; 5 Belvederer Allee, Weimar, 99423, Germany; 20 Myasnitskaya Street, Moscow, 101000, Russian Federation, tel.: +49 3643 58 26 51

E-mail: [daniela.zupan@uni-weimar.de](mailto:daniela.zupan@uni-weimar.de)

**Maria Gunko**, Research fellow, Institute of Geography Russian Academy of Sciences; 29 Staromonetny pereulok, Moscow, 119017, Russian Federation, tel.: +7 495 959 00 22

E-mail: [msgunko@igras.ru](mailto:msgunko@igras.ru)

## Abstract

Drawing on the scholarship of policy mobility and center-periphery relations, this article sheds light on the evolution of Russian urban planning and design since the new millennium and critically discusses recent trends. We do so through the lens of planning ideas and their circulation. In particular, the paper reconstructs how the comfortable city model emerged and unfolded in Russian urban planning and design. We identify three phases: the model's emergence within the professional community in the early 2000s, its consolidation in the 2010s, and its recent rise into the epitome of contemporary Russian city making. The paper finds that over the last two decades the centers of innovations in the field of urban planning and design have shifted. While mainly the regional capitals and other large and medium-sized Russian cities provided important stimuli in the beginning of the new millennium, contemporary urban planning and design is marked by attempts to spread many of Moscow's best practices throughout the country. Such attempts are enforced, inter alia, through federal programs and national modernization projects, educational initiatives, and the spread of the capital's expertise and experts to the regions. The resulting reshuffling of center-periphery relations is marked by the recentralization of knowledge, expertise, and professional resources and by further peripheralization through the undermining of local autonomy, expertise, innovation, and knowledge.

**Key words:** urban planning and design; comfortable city; comfortable urban environment; policy mobility; peripheralization; Russia

**Citation:** Zupan D., Gunko M. (2019) The Comfortable City Model: Researching Russian Urban Planning and Design Through Policy Mobilities. *Urban Studies and Practices*, vol. 4, no 3, pp. 7–22. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17323/usp4320197-22>

## Acknowledgements

The research was conducted in the framework of Daniela Zupan's postdoctoral research fellowship at the National Research University Higher School of Economics Moscow from September 2018 to August 2019, parts of the paper on peripheral planning practices were written by Maria Gunko with the support of the Russian Science Foundation (grant # 19-17-00174). The authors are grateful to all interview participants and to the anonymous reviewers for providing valuable comments and suggestions on the prior versions of the manuscript.

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, urbanism has developed into a central political topic in Russia, with the comfortable city as its epitome. The currently much discussed priority project ‘The formation of a comfortable urban environment’ [Gunko, Batunova, 2019a; 2019b], which officially seeks to improve

the quality and comfort of the urban environment throughout the country, is the latest expression of an increasing political interest in urban development. Over the last decade the term comfort has become the new leitmotiv of many policy makers around the country. It is referred to by urban planners, architects, private developers, and investors, and can be found in professional debates, policy documents [*Pravitel'stvo Moskvy, 2014; Arkhsovet Moskvy, 2015; Pravitel'stvo Rossiyskoy Federacii, 2019*], and in the programmatic guidelines for neighborhood (re)development.

In this paper we consider the comfortable city model as a paradigmatic case to discuss the broader changes that characterize Russian urban planning and design. Over the last decade the latter has seen increasing attempts to establish many of the *stolichnye*<sup>1</sup> best practices outside the center through federal programs and national modernization projects, educational initiatives, and the spread of the center's expertise and experts. Opponents interpret these expansionist attempts as seeking to dictate urban development elsewhere and meet them with growing hostility. We argue that such reactions are not merely a reflection of the highly uneven allocation of budgetary resources for urban development within Russia, but that they indicate a growing unease about changing center-periphery relations within the field of urban planning and design.

Against this background, the article sheds light on the evolution of Russian urban planning and design since the new millennium. We do so through the lens of planning ideas and their circulation, and more concretely through the comfortable city model<sup>2</sup>. The paper traces the emergence and evolution of the model within the Russian professional community. Doing so, the article seeks to answer the following questions: (1) How did the comfortable city model emerge, develop and spread in Russia, and how did it change throughout this process? (2) How was this dynamically unfolding process affected by the reshuffling of center-periphery relations in Russia? To answer the above, we draw on the policy mobility framework, which allows the combination of an emphasis on the local negotiations with a macro-perspective capturing the broader political and socio-economic peripheralization processes. The empirical evidence for the research was gathered through an extensive analysis of professional planning journals and policy documents (local, regional, and national) over the last two decades, and through in-depth semi-structured interviews with experts in the field of urban development carried out between April and June 2019. To trace how the comfortable city concept was implemented locally, we furthermore draw on studies the authors conducted in Perm [*Zupan, 2015*], Apatity [*Gunko, Eremenko, Batunova, 2020*], and Moscow [*Büdenbender, Zupan, 2017; Zupan, Büdenbender, 2019*].

The paper is structured as follows: section 2 contains the state of the art and presents the theoretical framework. In section 3, we reconstruct the emergence, development, and circulation of the comfortable city model in Russia. Section 4 discusses the main findings. Section 5 provides a summary and sketches directions for further research.

## 2. Studying policy mobilities against the background of shifting center-periphery relations in Russia

### 2.1 A process-based understanding of center and periphery

Research on center-periphery relations has seen a shift from a relatively static understanding of centers and peripheries, towards an approach of studying the different dimensions and dynamics of *peripheralization processes* [*Copus, 2001; Fischer-Tahir, Naumann, 2013; Kühn, 2015; Pfoser, 2017*]. Instead of understanding peripheries “as clearly determined, structural entities” [*Pfoser, 2017, p. 393*] or as spatial facts — that is, as geographical places far from a center or situated on the fringes of a city, region or nation — center-periphery relations are conceptualized as *social configurations* resting on unequal power relations [*Kühn, 2015, p. 367, 375*]. Unequal power relations and unequal access to material and symbolic resources lead to the emergence and reproduction of peripheries as “economically dependent, politically marginal and discursively stigmatised places” [*Pfoser, 2017, p. 393*]. Consequently, a multi-dimensional approach — comprising economic, social, political, and communicative-discursive dimensions — is advocated to study the processes that constitute and shape center-periphery relations [*Kühn, 2015, p. 368; Fischer-Tahir, Naumann, 2013, p. 9; Pfoser, 2017, p. 393; PoScoPP, 2015*]. By referring to the way the dependences and powerlessness are perceived, interpreted, and acted upon, the peripheraliza-

1 Best practices from the capital city, i.e. Moscow.

2 Russian professional discourse is characterized by different terms, which we subsume under the umbrella of the comfortable city in this paper. Among them are *komfortnyj gorod*/comfortable city, *komfortnaya gorodskaya sreda*/comfortable urban environment or *gorod komfortnyj dlya zhizni*/city comfortable for life.

tion concept offers a multidimensional and multiscalar framework to study “the material, institutional and discursive (re)production of inequalities” [Nagy, Timár, 2017, p. 6].

## 2.2 Center-periphery relations in Russia

As indicated by Golubchikov, Badyina and Makhrova [Golubchikov, Badyina, Makhrova, 2014, p. 618] “post-socialist societies have been deeply divided — with stagnation, decline, and marginalisation paralleling unparalleled wealth concentration, economic success and material consumption”. According to Brade and Rudolph [Brade, Rudolph, 2004, p. 70], growing spatial inequalities and a reshuffling of center-periphery relations present one of the most striking features of Russian development after the collapse of state socialism. Accordingly, post-socialist urban studies have produced a comprehensive body of work on the dynamics, effects, and causes of uneven socio-spatial development [Vendina, 1997; Badyina, Golubchikov, 2005; Medvedkov, Medvedkov, 2007; Brade, Rudolph, 2004; Molodikova, Makhrova 2007; Golubchikov, 2010; Golubchikov, Badyina, Makhrova, 2014; Kangas, 2013; Kinossian, 2017a; Zubarevich, Safronov, 2013]. Scholars have highlighted how the intrinsic logic of capitalist development acted as a key driver of socio-spatial polarization, producing inequalities and economic dependencies between socio-economically well-performing centers and the places left-behind [Golubchikov, Badyina, Makhrova, 2014, p. 619; Nagy, Timár, 2017, p. 5].

To adequately understand the socio-spatial disparities, however, we also have to take into account the broader socio-political trends in Russia. Post-socialist Russia has been marked by shifting trends of decentralization and recentralization [Sharafutdinova, 2010, p. 672]. With the collapse of state socialism and the launching of market reforms during the 1990s, decentralization and democratization seemed to set in at the local level [Gelman, 2010, p. 14f.; Gelman, Ryzhenkov, 2011, p. 450]. These, however, have been rolled back since the beginning of the 2000s [Sharafutdinova, 2010, p. 675]. Since then Russia has experienced a profound recentralization of governance, alongside rising authoritarianism [Gelman, Ryzhenkov 2011, p. 450; Gelman, 2018, p. 288]. This included the installment of the so-called power vertical, which heavily affected patterns of local governance and decreased local autonomy, for example through the reestablishment of political control over local governance and a reform of the taxation system in favor of centralizing financial resources [Sharafutdinova, 2010, p. 679ff.; 2013, p. 359; Gelman, 2010, p. 17; Gel'man, Ryzhenkov, 2011, p. 450f.; Kinossian, 2017b, p. 223].

These broader de- and recentralization trends also affected urban development. During state socialism, the degree of local autonomy and decision-making was restricted, and a number of mechanisms were employed to ensure the central government's control over local urban development [French, 1995, p. 3]. In the early post-Soviet period, the field of spatial planning underwent profound changes, which comprised the withdrawal of state planning and the shifting of responsibilities and control mechanisms to the municipal level [Brade, 2002, p. 13f.; Stanilov, 2007, p. 9f.]. The 1990s were characterized by a general rejection of planning regulations and of centralized, top-down planning [Stanilov, 2007, p. 10]. By the time that planning regulations, instruments, and mechanisms for their implementation had been incrementally reestablished from the new millennium onwards, the de-centralization dynamics had been rolled back [Sharafutdinova, 2010, p. 675]. Against this background, researchers argue that current Russian spatial planning resembles, at least to a certain extent, the Soviet top-down centralized planning system [Batunova, Gunko, 2018].

## 2.3 The policy mobility framework

The framework of policy mobility, which we use to analyze the evolution of the comfortable city model, engages with the policymaking dynamics, that is, the emergence and mobility of ideas and models, the actors and power dynamics involved, and the outcomes and effects of such processes. The framework evolved out of a renewed interest in the exchange of urban development ideas and policies [Peck, Theodore, 2010; 2015] (for an overview see [Temenos, McCann, 2013]). In light of globalization, concepts and policy models such as the creative city, the smart city or the sustainable city have “gone viral” and “have gained political currency around the globe” [Temenos, McCann, 2013, p. 344]. Importantly, the policy mobility approach allows the conceptualization of such policies not as a fixed or stable set of elements, but as a complex and dynamically evolving assemblage of elements, principles, and ideas [Ibid., p. 347].

The framework can take into account the key principles of peripheralization research as laid out in the beginning of this section. First, peripheralization focuses on unequal power relations, which

lead to the emergence and reproduction of centers and peripheries. Likewise, Peck and Theodore [2010, p. 169] argue that policy formation and transformation are socially constructed and have to be understood as fields of power. Consequently, the proponents of this approach aim to look inside the “black boxes” of the “powerful socio-spatial relations”, which constitute policy mobility assemblages [Temenos, McCann, 2013, p. 346], and which lead to the constant reproduction of (new) forms of uneven spatial development [Peck, Theodore, 2010, p. 170]. Second, peripheralization research stresses that peripheries are not static, rather, they can turn into centers and vice versa. Studies on policy mobility argue that hegemonies are always incomplete and foreground the possibilities for contestation and change [Peck, Theodore, 2010, p. 171; Temenos, McCann, 2013, p. 351]. While the framework engages with wider conditioning and constraining political, social, and economic forces (e.g. various legacies and pre-existing conditions), it also highlights the role of actors and actor networks in mobilizing, operationalizing, transforming, implementing, or resisting policies [Temenos, McCann, 2013, p. 347f.]. Third, peripheralization can take place at any scale. In this vein, the policy mobility framework stresses that mobility cannot be understood as the direct transfer of a policy from one place to another, but that such processes involve actors and elements on and between various levels. In short, the study of policy models, their emergence, circulation and mutation, is a promising lens for engaging with the field of Russian urban planning in the context of shifting center-periphery relations.

### 3. Reconstructing the comfortable city model in Russia

#### 3.1 Emergence (2000–2010)

During the Soviet period the term comfort was rarely used, but certain aspects of the concept were reflected in notions such as quality of life or the quality of the living environment, which were referred to in policy documents and professional discourse [Zalkind, Toropushina, 2009]. While the topic of comfortable-city making was largely neglected in the early post-Soviet period, it reemerged in the professional discourse in the early 2000s. Several processes contributed to this. First, the limits and negative effects of early post-Soviet planning were criticized, recognized, and incrementally acted upon. Second, confronted with this increasing criticism, professional debates were characterized by attempts to identify new aims and to discuss strategies for their realization. Third, this phase saw the first planning and design experiments for creating a comfortable environment in Russian cities, which added content and specification to the diffuse discursive attempts of new agenda setting.

#### *Criticism of Soviet and early post-Soviet urban development*

Debates on urbanism have intensified since the new millennium. Discussions revolved around the limits and weaknesses of contemporary Russian urban planning and design. It was acknowledged that post-Soviet urban planning had so far been concerned with infill developments rather than with holistic approaches, and with single buildings rather than with the urban environment. Against this background, a growing concern for integrated and complex approaches which would allow the production of urban spaces of higher quality evolved. This problematization was underpinned by the self-depiction of the Russian professional community as being backward, peripheral and provincial, in contrast to what was perceived as the progressive ‘West’ ([Revzin, 1997, p. 75; 1999, p. 19], Kiselev in [PR, 2006, p. 152], [Tatunashvili, 2011, p. 158]). In line with the dominant international discourse about the failing of state socialism and the unrivalled superiority of capitalism [Rose, 1999, p. 61], experts assumed that Russian development would have to catch up on the seventy years of artificial restraint and stagnation, and go back to ‘normal’ (Bokov in [PR, 1995, p. 7]). In this period the relationship between Russian and foreign practice was marked by a relatively uncritical stance towards the latter (for an exception see, for example, [Revzin, 1999]). Many foreign experts were invited to Russia as this was seen as a necessary step to overcome the bemoaned lack of knowledge and professionalism, and to create the discipline of urban planning and design anew (Khazanov, Kiselev, Bokov in [PR, 2006, p. 152]; Sitar, Skokan, in [PR 2008, p. 100f.]; [Korobina 2008, p. 109]).

#### *Diffuse notions of comfort*

The search for new approaches to urban planning and design intensified and a wide range of different ideas and concepts were discussed, among them an aesthetic urban environment, the walkable city,

human scale, a traditional city or a compact city. In general, however, this phase was characterized by disorientation. Professional debates revealed neither a dominant model nor a common understanding or a clear agenda for urban planning and design. Instead, it was still an open question in which direction Russian planning would develop and which approaches would become dominant (Glazychev in [PR, 2008, p. 94]; [Bokov, 2010, p. 108; Muratov, 2011, p. 73]).

Among the concepts discussed in this period was the creation of a comfortable urban environment. This concept incrementally took shape within two interrelated areas of urban development — housing and public spaces. In 2006/2007 the national housing program on ‘Affordable and comfortable housing’ was adopted (*‘Dostupnoe i komfortnoe zhil’e — grazhdanam Rossii’*, see [Pashintseva, 2007]). The program, however, did not entail any authoritative position with regard to urban planning and design. The term comfort was defined in a vague way and merely referred to higher standards of housing production. Nevertheless, the program provided important stimuli for further discussion. Consequently, the professional community defined comfortable housing as an anti-model of Soviet and post-Soviet housing, which were accused of lacking well-defined open spaces and producing uncultivated, incoherent and blurred territories [Bokova, 2009, p. 72]. The creation of a comfortable living environment was meant to meet the growing demands of the population for comfort, security, a local community, the recognizability of a place, mixed use, and sufficient infrastructure [Bazhenova, Kostina, 2002, p. 53; Bokova, 2009, p. 72; Goldhoorn, 2007, p. 14]. The term comfort also appeared as a new leitmotiv for open space development. For example, the 2008 International exhibition of architecture and design, Arch Moskva, was devoted to the urban environment and attracted a lot of attention from the professional community. To provide an idea of how comfortable urban environments might look, foreign experts were invited to showcase best practices from the ‘West’.

Although by the end of the first decade of the new millennium the term comfort was “on everyone’s lips” [Muratov, 2010a, p. 64], so far rather diffuse notions prevailed. Experts bemoaned the lack of definition, clear terminology, standards and implementation strategies [Pashintseva, 2007, p. 198; Gordeev, 2010, p. 65], and acknowledged: “so far we have nothing but slogans” [Pashintseva, 2007, p. 198] and “hot air” [Muratov, 2010a, p. 65].

#### *Experiments and ‘local stolitsy’*

Practical planning attempts further contributed to achieving a more articulated understanding of comfortable city making. Notably, many experiments in this period were carried out outside Moscow. While the capital had been the showcase and pace-setter for any kind of novelty, experiment and innovation during the Soviet Union [Frolic, 1976, p. 286f.], the city had lost its role as the innovative center in the fields of urban planning and design during the early post-Soviet period. That is not to say that Moscow generally lacked new developments, but novel approaches of complex and human-scale city making were more advanced in other Russian cities (Glazychev in [PR, 1995, p. 7]). For example, influential innovations concerning comprehensive, local, and sensitive forms of urban renewal were developed in Nizhni Novgorod (‘city inside-out’ [Revzin, 2000]), Samara (the redevelopment of the 79th quarter) or Irkutsk (the reconstruction of street block 130). The city of Kazan invited the famous planner Acebillo to set up a redevelopment strategy for the city center [Korobina, 2008, p. 108]. But it was the city of Perm that played a pivotal role in this process. Spearheaded by Oleg Chirkunov, the governor of Perm region at that time, the Perm experiment aimed at the modernization of the region and “catching-up” with “Western standards” [Chirkunov, 2010, p. 60]. It was within this initiative that the scattered elements were assembled together in what has later been described as the first Russian guidebook on the formation of a comfortable urban environment. This guidebook was the Perm Masterplan, developed by the Dutch planning firm KCAP. To transform Perm into a comfortable place to live in by international ‘Western’ standards [Muratov, 2010b, p. 58], the European, compact-city principles were deployed. These include urban block morphology, medium scale buildings, high quality urban spaces and public transport and walkability [KCAP, 2010]. Despite the fact that the Masterplan has not been implemented, many experts assume that it led to a rupture within the Russian professional community and was perceived as a completely new approach [Interview I, 2019; Interview IX, 2019]. Over the following years the Masterplan spread within private planning firms, public administrations, and educational institutions throughout the country [Nilina, 2013; Interview I, 2019; Interview III, 2019].

### 3.2 Formation and consolidation (2010–2014)

From 2010, the process entered a new phase, in which the comfortable city model was substantially formatted and consolidated. Three trends contributed to this process. First, single elements were assembled together in one overarching model. A shared vocabulary and underlying rationales were developed, and a common understanding of comfortable-city making began to emerge within the Russian professional community. Second, the comfortable city found the support of the political leadership and was declared the official role model for Moscow urban development. This declaration was accompanied by the development of the first authoritative guidelines on how to create comfortable urban spaces. Third, this phase was characterized by the implementation of projects, which showcased the comfortable city in materialized form, thereby also contributing to setting the standards for future comfortable-city making in Russia.

#### *Concept and rationales*

In the course of this phase, the single elements, bundles and principles — such as a city for people, human scale, walkability, urban block or compact and mixed-use structures — were assembled together under the umbrella of the Russian formula of the *komfortnyj gorod*. The comfortable city was presented as a cure to a wide range of urban problems, including traffic congestion, chaotic urban development, and security. It was narrated as a means to substantially increase the quality of life in cities. The model combined political, economic, cultural, and social rationales, making it an almost all-encompassing reference point for different actor groups.

Foreign ideas still acted as important sources. For example, many of the books of Jan Gehl — one of the ‘gurus’ of comfortable-city making around the globe — were translated and published in Russian [Afonichkin, 2012, p. 42]. In contrast to the previous phase, however, foreign knowledge and experience was critically reflected upon and transformed to meet specific, Russian requirements. The concept ceased to be perceived as an imported model and now importantly evolved from within the Russian context. Accordingly, a Russian formula of the comfortable city with its own foci, vocabulary, rationales, and understanding developed [Interview I, 2019]. This process went hand in hand with a departure, at least to a certain degree, from the dismissal of Soviet and early post-Soviet planning and design, and towards active attempts to incorporate the model into the specific post-Soviet context. In the field of housing, for example, it was connected to industrialized housing production, and transformed into the concept of comfortable mass housing [Goldhoorn, 2015, p. 1; Belov, 2015, p. 57]. We can also observe the emancipation from the backward narrative that had shaped the previous phase. Against the background that hardly any of the imported ready-mades had been successfully implemented, a more critical stance towards imported ‘Western’ practices emerged, and a more balanced partnership of equals between Russian and foreign experts evolved [Interview I, 2019; Interview X, 2019].

#### *Urban policy*

In this phase the comfortable city evolved from scattered local or regional initiatives and developed into a full-fledged urban policy. It was taken up by Moscow’s ruling elites and became the programmatic reference point for the capital’s future urban development. The political leadership became aware that urbanism could serve as a form of the realization of politics [Büdenbender, Zupan, 2017, p. 306]. Experts at that time noted that there is “a new wave of authoritarianism surging through the corridors of federal power”, and that this has direct effects on space production [Muratov, 2012, p. 82]. In 2010, the then-President Dmitry Medvedev appointed Sergey Sobyenin as Moscow’s major, a step that fundamentally changed the city’s position vis-a-vis the federal powers. This federal ‘take-over’ meant that Moscow was firmly reintegrated into the power vertical [Büdenbender, Zupan, 2017, p. 301, 303; Interview VII, 2019]. When Sobyenin was appointed, his administration developed the program ‘Moscow: a city comfortable for life’ [Pravitel’stvo Moskvy, 2014]. This document covered a broad spectrum of topics, ranging from mobility to health, education and the creation of a comfortable urban environment. In the following years, specific guidelines on selected topics were set up, for example, on the formation of comfortable urban housing [Arkhsovet Moskvy, 2015] or on Moscow’s *blagoustroystvo*<sup>3</sup> [Strelka KB, 2016].

3 *Blagoustroystvo* is a notion that does not have a direct equivalent in English. It pertains to measures of cityscape maintenance, landscaping, and urban design aimed at improving living conditions, as well as upgrading the sanitary and aesthetic state of the territory.

From then on, the city regained its role as the main trendsetter and generator of innovation in the field of urban development, which it had lost in the early post-Soviet period.

*Examples built in the center and beyond*

Despite the theoretical efforts among professionals and policy makers, interpretations of the comfortable city still differed within the professional community [Shchukin, 2014, p. 136]. It was projects implementation, which provided substance and a concrete, spatial understanding of how comfort might look in built form. The projects implemented in this phase made important contributions to the model's development because they enhanced the emergence of a shared understanding and set the standards for future projects.

During this phase a large number of projects emerged. While implementations were by no means restricted to Moscow, it was the capital's projects, which attracted most attention and further developed into the main references and best practices for comfortable-city making. In the field of housing, dense complexes with courtyards, colorful children's playgrounds surrounded by even more colorful facades emerged; elements, which later became signifiers of comfortable housing (see for example projects by the developers Rose Group, Brusnika, PIK, Urban Group or KROST). The Moscow comfortable urban environment agenda included the design of public spaces. The transformation of Gorky Park for Culture and Leisure in 2011, into a hip meeting point combining international state of the art design and attractive commercial spaces, can be regarded as kick-starting this development [Kalyukin, Borén, Byerley, 2015; Büdenbender, Zupan, 2017, p. 306]. This successful model of upgrading open spaces was replicated for many other open spaces, first in Moscow and then throughout the country.

*3.3. 'Comfortization' throughout Russia: expansion and diffusion (since 2014)*

Over the last couple of years, the process has entered a new phase, which has been characterized by the top-down diffusion of the Moscow-based comfortable city model throughout Russia. First, we observe forthright attempts by the center to spread the model with the help of different mechanisms and channels. Second, the comfortable city developed into the dominant model within Russian urban planning and design, although, according to critics, its massive spread went hand in hand with a certain loss of substance. Third, local implementations of national programs reflect increasing difficulties in addressing specific challenges at the local level, and the diminishing of local autonomy.

*Top-down expansion (programs, education, planning institutions)*

Over the last few years, a whole repertoire of instruments, channels, and mechanisms have been set in place to spread the comfortable city model within Russia. The main driving forces behind this process are the federal authorities: "In recent years, the topic of the *blagoustroystvo* of the cityscape has acquired a completely new dimension. For decades this was the exclusive domain of regional and municipal authorities, but now it has turned into a federal responsibility" [Kvartal, 2018, p. 6, authors translation]. This shift took place in 2014, when President Putin announced in the State Council that the creation of a comfortable urban environment in all Russian cities was a federal task [ibid].

National programs have developed into an important channel to spread the model. The main program in this regard is the priority project 'The formation of a comfortable urban environment', which officially aims to improve the quality and comfort of the urban environment throughout the country. Equally important are educational initiatives and the preparation of new cadres [Petrova, 2018]. Prime Minister Dmitriy Medvedev recently noted [Gazeta.ru, 2019, authors translation]: "We have to make sure that in every municipal center of the Federation professional teams emerge: small, well-knit patriotic local teams who are capable of producing architectural and planning solutions and who can carry out contracting work". The program Arkhitektory.rf, which has been carried out by dom.rf and Strelka KB since 2018, is an example of such an initiative producing loyal cadres. Another central pillar is the development of new standards and guidelines, the number of which has significantly increased over the recent years. While such planning documents are not legally binding, they are, in the long run, meant to transform the legal and regulatory basis of Russian urban planning. Many experts perceive them as a means of innovating the Russian planning system, which is depicted as a hindering factor for implementing contemporary approaches of comfortable city making [Kvartal, 2018, p. 9].

The understanding of comfortable-city making, which is currently being spread throughout Russia, clearly draws inspiration from the policies previously developed in Moscow. Professional debates reveal the emergence of a new center-periphery narrative: the center is portrayed as the carrier and provider of progressive knowledge, of experience and expertise, while denying that the peripheries have sufficient competences and skills to solve urban planning and design challenges on their own. This holds especially true for the experts involved. As an urban planning expert in Moscow notes on the so-called *stolichnye* experts — experts from the capital that seek to spread their knowledge and competence throughout the country: “According to the dominant narrative, all the competence is accumulated in the center. But in reality, they [*stolichnye* experts] are not capable of developing anything for the peripheries, because they have no knowledge about what is happening there or what is needed there” (*Interview III, 2019*), authors translation). The interviewee specifically refers to Strelka, an organization initially serving as a critical platform for engaging with questions of spatial development. Starting from Moscow, the firm has developed into a key collaborator in shaping Russian urbanism, with very close ties to the Moscow and federal authorities. Strelka KB develops guidelines for the whole country and can be regarded as one of the most powerful organizations involved in spreading ‘comfort’ through the *blagoustroystvo* of cities and regions within Russia [*Suvorova, Mudryy, 2017*].

#### *Political short-term spatial fix*

The principles together with their underlying rationales were assembled together in the Russian formula of the comfortable city and spread through various channels. The model is gaining strength and is currently being established as the leading paradigm of Russian urban development. This spread, however, goes hand in hand with a dilution of the model. At first glance, it seems that what is being spread from above is the Moscow model, as it has been firmly established as a successful policy in the capital under Mayor Sobyanin. In reality, however, it appears to be a cheaper imitation of, or superficial reference to, the latter. Taking into account Russia’s highly uneven resource redistribution in favor of the capital this does not come much as a surprise [*Trubina, 2015, p. 30; Interview VII, 2019*].

Experts argue that while the process started with good intentions and progressive ideas, the comfortable city model in general, and *blagoustroystvo* in particular, have developed into mere substitutes for a truly complex understanding of the urban environment as a mediator between people and space [*Interview III, 2019; Interview VI, 2019*]. Many argue that the concept is used by policy makers as a superficial and temporal spatial fix to calm the opposition and to alleviate tensions and social conflicts [*Interview I, 2019; Interview VII, 2019; Interview VIIIb, 2019; Interview X, 2019*]: “It became clear to the authorities that the sole focus on quantity does not satisfy the population, the voters. The latter want more. They want a clean environment; they want good public spaces [...] You can build as much as you want, but *blagoustroystvo* has much more effect, it is quicker and cheaper — and this was acknowledged at the national level” (*Interview I, 2019*), authors translation).

Over recent years comfort and *blagoustroystvo* have been established as central reference points promising an increase in the population’s well-being. However, these terms distract from the political questions such as sufficient and spatially balanced provision of infrastructure or growing inequalities between and within cities, thus obscuring the political significance of spatial planning and urban development. A case in point is the comfortable urban environment index developed by dom.rf and Strelka KB (<https://индекс.дом.рф>). The main indicators to measure the quality of the urban environment include safety, comfort, ecology, identity, and diversity and the environment’s contemporaneity. However, while new fountains, playgrounds, and paving tiles might present relatively cheap short-term fixes, one wonders if it is not more fundamental issues, such as the provision of workplaces, housing and other basic infrastructure that should be the priority. Such a sustainable long-term development would, however, require serious investment and a redistribution of resources.

#### *Decreasing local autonomy*

Due to the dependence of cities on federal and regional subsidies the scope of local autonomy and self-government is decreasing [*Interview I, 2019; Interview III, 2019; Interview VIIIa, 2019; Interview X, 2019*]. The prioritization of national projects not only further concentrates financial resources, but also limits the set of alternative development paths, as municipalities face ever-more detailed recommendations from the center on how to carry out urban planning and design locally. Experts raise

the concern that such recentralization might prevent the possibility of effective spatial development [Interview III, 2019].

Apatity, a small city located in Murmanskaya oblast, is a case in point. Since the collapse of state socialism the city has been confronted with high levels of depopulation and budget austerity, resulting in the downgrading of the cityscape. The priority project on ‘The formation of a comfortable urban environment’ could have become an important and much-needed mechanism to engage with these challenges. The implementation, however, shows that the city has merely focused on minor spatial fixes, such as the *blagoustroystvo* of courtyards, the repair of driveways, lighting, the installation of benches and trash bins. The local administration is well aware that such measures do not lead to a significant improvement of the cityscape: “There is no comprehensiveness in what we are allowed to do. While we are paving driveways in courtyards, we can’t make a proper storm sewerage system. Every year when the snow melts this paving is being washed away” [Interview XI, 2019, authors translation]. Instead of creating a truly more comfortable urban environment, the priority project aggravates the situation by dispensing much-needed funds on decorations and superficial fixes. Even with regard to these minor fixes, the projects hardly show any sign of locally sensitive designs, which would cater to the specific needs and conditions. Instead, the appearance of new architectural forms, lighting, benches and trash bins resembles Moscow best practices, which can be meanwhile found in cities throughout the country. The Apatity case displays the severe restrictions that exist at the local level, namely through hard factors (e.g. strict regulations such as a narrow list of priority projects and the lack of resources) and through soft factors (e.g. the credibility and legitimation of *stolichnye* best practices).

## Discussion

The previous sections have shown that contemporary Russian urban planning and design is marked by growing recentralization. During the period analyzed, the centers of innovation in the field shifted, pointing to the processual and open-ended character of center-periphery relations. At the beginning of the new millennium, regional capitals and large and medium-sized Russian cities provided important stimuli and novel solutions. Over the last decade, however, local autonomy and self-government throughout the country significantly decreased. Moscow and the federal powers have gained power and increasingly seek to dictate urban planning and design throughout the country.

The unequal access to, and distribution of material and symbolic resources reinforces peripheralization within Russian urban planning and design. Our analysis revealed different, although interconnected dimensions through which this process unfolds: economic, communicative-discursive, and political. First, while cities in Russia officially exercise local autonomy and bear responsibility for local urban development, the hierarchical fiscal policy constrains their actual decision-making power and significantly increases their dependence on the decisions taken in the center [Kinossian, 2017b, p. 229]. In urban development, this trend is further underpinned by the prioritization of national modernization projects, and the allocation of funds to them.

Second, the analysis revealed a communicative-discursive dimension in the ongoing peripheralization process. Debates are marked by the emergence of a narrative that depicts the center as the carrier and provider of knowledge, experience, and expertise, while denying that the peripheries have sufficient competences and skills to solve urban planning and design challenges on their own. To ‘educate’ the rest of the country, the center provides narrow, detailed, and fixed ready-mades for urban development, which are enforced, inter alia, through guidelines and educational initiatives, following the logic: “You have a problem? You cannot solve it on your own, because you don’t know how? Here are the standards how to proceed, now do it!” [Interview VIIIA, 2019] authors translation).

However, while opportunities on the local level are shrinking, there is still room to maneuver. Research has argued that despite Russia’s strongly central-hierarchical system and power vertical, it would be wrong to conclude that the development of Russian cities and regions is completely dictated by the center [Kinossian, 2017b, p. 233]. Besides the imposition of top-down sanctions, local actors and politics do exhibit some autonomy vis-à-vis the higher levels of authority [Gelman, Ryzhenkov, 2011, p. 449, 453f.]. This also holds true for urban planning and design, as an interviewee explains: “Even within this narrow framework, the governors have the possibility to translate these standards in different ways, and to develop alternative approaches — of course, only if such attempts do not contradict the federal powers” [Interview VIIIA, 2019, authors translation]. One can find examples of independent and creative rethinking of urban development, albeit, driven by the private sector [Gunko, Pivovarov, Averkieva, 2019]. Such examples, however, require strong agency of the local policy makers, of private

business, and of civil society; the kind of agency which would oppose, alter or creatively translate the top-down established approaches and use funds to actually improve the local situation.

Finally, the analysis revealed a political dimension, which also helps to explain the seductive power of the center's comfortization strategy. At the moment, we can observe the paradoxical situation in which urbanism is being established as a central political field, while the authorities simultaneously attempt to depoliticize urban planning and design. Contemporary urban development in Russia focuses on diffuse topics such as aesthetics, comfort, and quality of life. Many of these developments have led to an increase in the quality of the urban environment, however, the highly visible objects mostly present insubstantial, singular improvements. They distract from far more profound questions such as the insufficient and unbalanced provision of infrastructure or the growing intra-urban inequalities. It seems that comfort has become a substitute for comprehensive urban planning, depriving the latter of its complexity on the one hand, and of its political character on the other. According to one interviewee, many of the currently introduced measures "create the semblance of concern, but they don't provide solutions for real problems. Indeed, they even distract from serious questions, because as soon as we engage with the real problems, we are confronted with questions that go well beyond the sphere of spatial development" (*Interview III, 2019*] authors translation).

In the light of budget austerity, the comfortization of the country has become a political tool to assure the loyalty and support of the population [*Interview III, 2019*], and to distract from the lack of accountable government in an autocratic political system: "Urban planning is a democratic institution, in which the municipality and the local community are responsible for city development and in which values and strategies develop bottom-up. [...] In Russia, it cannot work at the moment, because we don't have democracy" (*Interview VIIIa, 2019*] authors translation).

## Conclusion

This paper reconstructed the emergence and development of the comfortable city model in Russia, to shed light on the evolution of Russian urban planning and design since the start of the new millennium. Drawing on the scholarship of policy mobility and center-periphery relations, we identified three phases through which the model unfolded, each of which being characterized by a specific relation to foreign planning practices and by different relations between Moscow and other Russian cities.

In the first phase (emergence, 2000–2010), the professional discourse was shaped by the self-depiction of the Russian professional community as being backward and peripheral and which had to overcome Soviet practices of city making catching up with the 'progressive West'. Accordingly, the understanding of comfort in this period was to a large extent shaped by the rather uncritical transfer of foreign ideas, best practices and experts. Within Russia, the most influential attempts towards comfortable-city making took place outside the Russian capital. Local authorities did not perceive themselves as provincial, but recognized their political, economic, cultural, and territorial potential [*Korobina, 2008, p. 106*] and acted as the main innovation drivers. Local cadres generally enjoyed relative freedom. While federal authorities provided stimuli in urban development (e.g. programs), they did not put forward any authoritative position with regard to urban planning and design models.

The second phase (formation and consolidation, 2010–2014) showcased a more balanced relation towards foreign practices. This went hand in hand with the development of a Russian formula of the comfortable city. The latter was no longer perceived as an imported model, but as a home-grown practice. Within Russia, Moscow — importantly supported by the federal powers — began to reestablish its role as the main trendsetter in the field of urban planning and design.

In the third phase (expansion and diffusion, since 2014) discussions about foreign versus Russian practices lost their importance and debates increasingly centered on the developments and power relations within Russia. In this regard, a narrative is evolving, which assigns knowledge, experience, and professionalism to the center, and a lack of these characteristics to the rest of the country. The center increasingly acts as the accumulator and distributor of financial resources, knowledge, and expertise in urban planning and design and is using several channels to 'educate' the rest of the country. The comfortable city model in general, and *blagoustroystvo* in particular, have developed into mere substitutes for a truly complex understanding of the urban environment, and are instrumentalized for political purposes.

Urban planning and design in Russia is marked by the recentralization of knowledge, expertise, and professional resources, and by the further peripheralization and undermining of local autonomy, expertise, innovation, and local and indigenous knowledge. In many respects, this process echoes the broader political climate in Russia, and the changes therein.

## List of Interviewees

- Interview I: Urban planner and architect, Moscow, 01.04.2019  
Interview II: Architect and former policy maker, Moscow, 09.04.2019  
Interview III: Urban planner, Moscow, 16.04.2019  
Interview IV: Architect, Nizhnyj Novgorod, 22.04.2019  
Interview V: Architect, expert on urban development and researcher, Moscow, 24.04.2019  
Interview VI: Urban planner, Moscow, 25.04.2019  
Interview VII: Urban planner, city administration, Moscow, 29.04.2019  
Interview VIII: VIIIa expert in urban development; VIIIb, architect, Moscow, 06.06.2019  
Interview IX: Architect, Ekaterinburg, 20.06.2019  
Interview X: Architect, Ekaterinburg, 21.06.2019  
Interview XI: Urban planner, city administration, Apatity, 21.02.2019

## References

- Afonichkin A. (2012) Chelovechnye goroda [Humans Cities]. *Proekt Rossiya* [Project Russia], vol. 64, no 2, pp 42. (in Russian)
- Arkshovet Moskvy (2015) Prezentatsiya "Polozheniya standarta № 305-PP" [Arch Council. Presentation 'Statements of the Standard no 305-RR'] Available at: <https://archsovets.msk.ru/presscenter/polozheniya-standarta-305-pp> (accessed 29.05.2019). (in Russian)
- Badyina A., Golubchikov O. (2005) Gentrification in central Moscow – a market process or a deliberate policy? *Geografiska Annaler*, vol. 87, no 2, pp. 113–129.
- Batunova E., Gunko M. (2018) Urban shrinkage: an unspoken challenge of spatial planning in Russian small and medium-sized cities. *European Planning Studies*, vol. 26, no 8, pp. 1580–1597.
- Bazhenova E.S., Kostina E.G. (2002) Low-rise housing – myth and reality. *Project Russia*, vol. 25, pp. 53–56.
- Belov A. (2015) New standards. *Project Russia*, vol. 7, no 3, p. 57.
- Bokova A. (2009) Shaping the urban fabric: the future of residential unit. *Project Russia*, vol. 5, no 2, pp. 68–79.
- Bokov A. (2010) The new pragmatism and the old city. *Project Russia*, vol. 57, no 3, pp. 108–109.
- Brade I. (2002) Der Wandel der russischen Städte in den 1990er Jahren. Einführungen zum Thema. *Die Städte Russlands im Wandel. Raumstrukturelle Veränderungen am Ende des 20. Jahrhunderts*/Brade I. (Hrsg.) Leipzig: Institut für Länderkunde, pp. 12–19.
- Brade I., Rudolph R. (2004) Moscow, the global city? The position of the Russian capital within the European system of metropolitan areas. *Area*, vol. 36, no 1, pp. 69–80.
- Büdenbender M., Zupan D. (2017) The evolution of neoliberal urbanism in Moscow, 1992–2015. *Antipode*, vol. 49, no 2, pp. 294–313.
- Chirkunov O. (2010) Interview with Oleg Chirkunov: "In a city there should be life". *Project Russia*, vol. 56, no 2, pp. 60–62.
- Copus A.K. (2001) From core-periphery to polycentric development: concepts of spatial and aspatial peripherality. *European Planning Studies*, vol. 9, no 4, pp. 539–552.
- Fischer-Tahir A., Naumann M. (eds.) (2013) *Peripheralization. The making of spatial dependencies and social injustice*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- French R. (1995) *Plans, Pragmatism and People. The Legacy of Soviet Planning for Today's Cities*. London: UCL Press.
- Frolic B.M. (1976) *The New Moscow City Plan. The city in Russian history*/Hamm M.F. (ed.). Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, pp. 277–288.
- Gazeta.ru (2019) Ne zhit' na vyselkakh: kak Putin poruchil preobrazit' rossiyskie goroda [Not life on the outskirts: How Putin instructed to transform Russian cities]. *Gazeta.ru*. Available at: <https://www.gazeta.ru/business/2019/02/18/12192823.shtml> (accessed 16.09.2019). (in Russian)
- Gelman V. (2010) The dynamics of subnational authoritarianism. *Russian Politics & Law*, vol. 48, no 2, pp. 7–26. (in Russian)
- Gelman V., Ryzhenkov S. (2011). Local regimes, sub-national governance and the 'Power Vertical' in contemporary Russia. *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 63, no 3, pp. 449–465.
- Gelman V. (2018) Bringing actors back in: political choices and sources of post-Soviet regime dynamics. *Post-Soviet Affairs*, vol. 34, no 5, pp. 282–296.
- Goldhoorn B. (2007) V Moskve net kontseptsii gorodskogo prostranstva [There is no an urban space concept in Moscow]. *Proekt Rossiya* [Project Russia], vol. 43, no 1, pp. 14–16. (in Russian)

- Golubchikov O. (2010) World-city-entrepreneurialism: globalist imaginaries, neoliberal geographies, and the production of new St Petersburg. *Environment and Planning A*, vol. 42, no 3, pp. 626–643.
- Golubchikov O., Badyina A., Makhrova A. (2014) The hybrid spatialities of transition: capitalism, legacy and uneven urban economic restructuring. *Urban Studies*, vol. 51, no 4, pp. 617–633.
- Gordeev S. (2010) Interview with Sergey Gordeev: The problems of Russian cities are not unique. *Project Russia*, vol. 56, no 2, pp. 63–68.
- Gunko M., Medvedev A. (2018) Dull place or green idyll: local identity and migration intentions of small city youth. *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, vol. 109, no 5, pp. 661–676.
- Gunko M., Batunova E. (2019a) Strategiya fontanov i detskikh ploshchadok. Chast 1 [Strategy of fountains and playgrounds. Part 1]. *Republica*. Available at: <https://republic.ru/posts/93305> (accessed 29.05.2019). (in Russian)
- Gunko M., Batunova E. (2019b) Strategiya fontanov i detskikh ploshchadok. Chast 2 [Strategy of fountains and playgrounds. Part 2]. *Republica*. Available at: <https://republic.ru/posts/93329> (accessed 29.05.2019). (in Russian)
- Gunko M., Pivovarov G., Averkieva K. (2019) Revitalizatsiya v malykh gorodakh Evropeyskoy Rossii (na primere Borovichy, Vyksy i Rostova) [Revitalization in small towns of European Russia (an example of Borovichy, Vyksa, and Rostov)]. *Izvestiya RAN. Seriya goeograficheskaya* [Bulletin of Russian Academy of Sciences. Geography Series], no 5, pp. 18–31. (in Russian)
- Gunko M., Eremenko Iu., Batunova E. (2020) Strategii planirovaniya v usloviyakh gorodskogo szhatiya v Rossii: issledovanie malykh i srednikh gorodov [Strategies of planning in a context of shrinking in Russia: Survey on small and medium towns]. *Mir Rossii* [Universe of Russia], vol. 29, no 3, pp. 121–141. (in Russian)
- Kalyukin A., Borén T., Byerley A. (2015) The second generation of post-socialist change: Gorky Park and public space in Moscow. *Urban Geography*, vol. 36, no 5, pp. 674–695.
- Kangas A. (2013) Governmentalities of big Moscow: particularising neoliberal statecraft. *Geopolitics*, vol. 18, no 2, pp. 299–314.
- KCAP. (2012) Transforming the City. Perm Strategic Masterplan. Available at: <http://www.Permgenplan.ru/content/view/21/38/> (accessed 25.01.2012).
- Kinossian N. (2017a) State-led metropolisation in Russia. *Urban Research & Practice*, vol. 10, no 4, pp. 466–476.
- Kinossian N. (2017b) Re-colonising the Arctic: the preparation of spatial planning policy in Murmansk Oblast, Russia. *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*, vol. 35, no 2, pp. 221–238.
- Korobina I. (2008) City development in Russia: What do we expect from the authorities? *Project Russia*, vol. 49, no 3, pp. 106–109.
- Kvartal (2018) Pravila, kotorye izmenyat zhizn' k luchshemu [Quarter. Rules, which will change life to better]. *Kvartal. Kak privlech' den'gi v gorod* [Quarter. How to raise money to the city], pp. 5–28. Available at: <https://media.strelka-kb.com/#!/tab/84488506-3> (accessed 29.05.2019). (in Russian)
- Kühn M. (2015) Peripheralization: theoretical concepts explaining socio-spatial inequalities. *European Planning Studies*, vol. 23, no 2, pp. 367–378.
- Medvedkov Y., Medvedkov O. (2007) Upscale housing in post-Soviet Moscow and its environs. *The post-socialist city*/Stanilov K. (ed.). Dodrecht: Springer, pp. 245–265.
- Molodikova I., Makhrova A. (2007) Urbanization patterns in Russia in the post-Soviet era. *The post-socialist city*/Stanilov K. (ed.). Dodrecht: Springer, pp. 53–70.
- Muratov A. (2010a) Housing. *Project Russia*, vol. 55, no 1, pp. 65–67.
- Muratov A. (2010b) Perm. *Project Russia*, vol. 56, no 2, pp. 57–59.
- Muratov A. (2011) Grands projets. *Project Russia*, vol. 60, no 2, pp. 73–75.
- Muratov A. (2012) Heritage. *Project Russia*, vol. 65, no 3, pp. 81–83.
- Nagy E., Timár J. (2017) The (re-)production of peripherality in Central and Eastern Europe. *European Spatial Research and Policy*, vol. 24, no 2, pp. 5–16.
- Nilina N. (2013) Strategicheskii master-plan goroda Permi kak zerkalo gradostroitel'noy deyatelnosti v Rossii [Strategic masterplan of the city of Perm as a mirror of urban planning reality in Russia]. Available at: <http://www.archi.ru/russia/48274/strategicheskii-master-plan-goroda-Permi-kak-zerkalo-gradostroitelnoi-deyatelnosti-v-rossii> (accessed 08.09.2012). (in Russian)
- Pashintseva T. (2007) Pervye opyty natsional'nogo proekta [First experiences of national project]. *Project Russia*, vol. 45, no 3, pp. 198–201. (in Russian)
- Peck J., Theodore N. (2010) Mobilizing policy: models, methods and mutations. *Geoforum*, vol. 41, pp. 169–174.
- Peck J., Theodore N. (2015) Fast policy: Experimental statecraft at the thresholds of neoliberalism. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Petrova E. (2018) Novye arkhitektory: kto budet razvivat' goroda Rossii [New architects: Who will develop Russian cities]. Available at: [https://m.gazeta.ru/social/2018/10/17/12025333.shtml?fbclid=IwAR2SvZiNStqAS-2wmxq-92DZ1C\\_XKMHFvgzF5hYmZJ2qjqQhvGxU6D\\_-iVw](https://m.gazeta.ru/social/2018/10/17/12025333.shtml?fbclid=IwAR2SvZiNStqAS-2wmxq-92DZ1C_XKMHFvgzF5hYmZJ2qjqQhvGxU6D_-iVw) (accessed 23.10.2018). (in Russian)

- Pfoser A. (2018) Narratives of peripheralisation: place, agency and generational cohorts in post-industrial Estonia. *European Urban and Regional Studies*, vol. 25, no 4, pp. 391–404.
- PoSCoPP – Research Group Production of Space in the Context of Polarisation and Peripheralisation. Understanding new geographies of Central and Eastern Europe (2015). *Understanding new geographies of Central and Eastern Europe: socio-spatial polarization and peripheralization in a rapidly changing region*/Lang T., Henn S., Kornelia E., Sgibnev W. (eds.). Basingstoke: Palgrave, pp. 1–24.
- Pravitel'stvo Moskvy (2014) Programma razvitiya Moskvy "MOSKVA – GOROD, UDOBNIY DLYA ZHIZNI" [The government of Moscow. Development program of Moscow 'Moscow is a livable city']. Available at: <http://s.mos.ru/common/upload/M2025.pdf> (accessed 25.08.2015). (in Russian)
- Pravitel'stvo Rossiyskoy Federacii (2019) Strategiya prostranstvennogo razvitiya Rossiyskoy Federacii na period do 2025 goda [The government of the Russian Federation. Strategy of the spatial development of the Russian Federation on term till 2025]. Available at: <http://static.government.ru/media/files/UVAUqUtT08o60RktoOX-L22jAe7irNxc.pdf> (accessed 25.03.2020). (in Russian)
- Prioritetnyy proekt "Formirovanie komfortnoy gorodskoy sredy" (2017) [Priority project 'Forming a comfortable urban environment']. Available at: <http://www.minstroyrf.ru/trades/gorodskaya-sreda/strategicheskoe-napravlenie-razvitiya-zhkh-i-gorodskaya-sreda/> (accessed 25.03.2020). (in Russian)
- PR – Project Russia. (1995) Round Table: Architecture in a post-totalitarian society. *Project Russia*, vol. 1, no 1, pp. 6–12.
- PR – Proekt Rossiya. (2006) Chelovek s osmyslennym litsom. Kruglyy stol o meste arkhitekora v sovremennoy Rossii [Project Russia. A man with a sensible face. Round table about the place of the architect in contemporary Russia]. *Proekt Rossiya* [Project Russia], vol. 40, no 2, pp. 149–152. (in Russian)
- PR – Project Russia. (2008) New cities: pro et contra. A questionnaire by PR. *Project Russia*, vol. 48, no 2, pp. 90–101.
- Revzin G. (1997) Negotiation as a positive program. *Project Russia*, vol. 5, pp. 73–75.
- Revzin G. (1999) Interview with Yury Gnedovskiy. *Project Russia*, vol. 13, pp. 17–20.
- Revzin G. (2000) City inside out. Urban renewal in Nizhni Novgorod. *Project Russia*, vol. 17, pp. 41–48.
- Rose N. (1999) Power of freedom. Reframing political thought. Cambridge: University Press.
- Sharafutdinova G. (2010) Subnational governance in Russia: how Putin changed the contract with his agents and problems it created for Medvedev. *Publius*, vol. 40, no 4, pp. 672–696.
- Sharafutdinova G. (2013) Gestalt switch in Russian Federalism: the decline in regional power under Putin. *Comparative Politics*, vol. 45, no 3, pp. 357–376.
- Shchukin A. (2014) Urban block as anti-mikrorajon. *Project Russia*, vol. 73, no 3, pp. 136–139.
- Stanilov K. (2007) Taking stock of post-socialist urban development: a recapitulation. *The post-socialist city*/Stanilov K. (ed.). Dordrecht: Springer, pp. 3–17.
- Strelka KB. (2016) Svodnyy standart blagoustroystva ulits Moskvy [Consolidated standard of public services and amenities of streets in Moscow]. Available at: [https://www.mos.ru/upload/newsfeed/newsfeed/160927\\_book\\_standart\\_small\\_final.pdf](https://www.mos.ru/upload/newsfeed/newsfeed/160927_book_standart_small_final.pdf) (accessed 25.03.2020). (in Russian)
- Suvorova N., Mudryy S. (2017) Issledovanie: kak ustroen biznes 'Strelki' [The survey: How the 'Strelka' business is organized]. Available at: <https://incussia.ru/fly/issledovanie-kak-ustroen-biznes-strelki/> (accessed 29.05.2019). (in Russian)
- Tatunashvili N. (2011) Alternative street block. *Project Russia*, vol. 60, no 2, pp. 158–159.
- Temenos C., McCann E. (2013) Geographies of policy mobilities. *Geography Compass*, vol. 7, no 5, pp. 344–357.
- Trubina E. (2015) Configuring center-periphery relations: relational legacy in the over-centralized state. *Journal of Architecture and Urbanism*, vol. 39, no 1, pp. 28–36.
- Vendina O.I. (1997) Transformation processes in Moscow and intra-urban stratification of population. *GeoJournal*, vol. 42, no 4, pp. 349–363.
- Zalkind L., Toropushina, E. (2009) Zhilishchnaya politika Rossii: Severnoe izmerenie [Housing policy in Russia: Northern dimension]. Apatity: Kola Scientific Center of RAS. (in Russian)
- Zubarevich N.V., Safronov S.G. (2013) Neravenstvo sotsial'no-ekonomicheskogo razvitiya regionov i gorodov Rossii 2000-kh godov: rost ili snizheniye? [Inequality of socio-economic development of regions and cities of Russia in the 2000s: growth or decrease?]. *Obshchestvennyye Nauki i Sovremennost'* [Social Sciences and Contemporary World], no 6, pp. 15–26. (in Russian)
- Zupan D. (2015) Local debates on 'global' planning concepts: the 'compact European city' model in postsocialist Russia – the case of Perm'. *Europa Regional*, vol. 22, no 1–2, pp. 39–52.
- Zupan D., Büdenbender M. (2019) Moscow urban development. Neoliberal urbanism and green infrastructures. *Postsocialist urban infrastructures*/Tuvikene T., Sgibnev W., Neugebauer C. (eds.). London, New York: Routledge, pp. 125–141.

Д. ЗУПАН, М.С. ГУНЬКО

# «КОМФОРТНЫЙ ГОРОД»: ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ ГОРОДСКОГО ПЛАНИРОВАНИЯ И ПРОЕКТИРОВАНИЯ В РОССИИ ЧЕРЕЗ ПРИЗМУ МОБИЛЬНОСТИ ПОЛИТИКИ

**Зупан Даниэла**, PhD, младшая профессорка программы «Европейские города и городское наследие» Веймарского Университета Баухауса; Germany, 599423, Weimar, 5 Belvederer Allee; научная сотрудница постдокторантуры, НИУ ВШЭ; Российская Федерация, 101000, Москва, ул. Мясницкая, 20, тел.: +49 3643 58 26 51

E-mail: [daniela.zupan@uni-weimar.de](mailto:daniela.zupan@uni-weimar.de)

**Гунько Мария Сергеевна**, кандидат географических наук, научный сотрудник Института географии Российской академии наук; Российская Федерация, 119017, г. Москва, Старомонетный переулок, 29, тел.: +7 495 959 00 22

E-mail: [msgunko@igras.ru](mailto:msgunko@igras.ru)

В данной статье рассматривается эволюция городского планирования и проектирования в России через циркуляцию планировочных идей на примере возникновения и развития концепции «комфортного города». Статья опирается на теоретические разработки в области мобильности политики и центр-периферийных взаимоотношений. На основе проведенного анализа можно выделить три этапа: первые обсуждения в профессиональном сообществе в начале 2000-х годов; консолидация концепции в середине 2010-х; превращение в *де-факто* лейтмотив городского планирования и развития в 2010-х. В статье отмечается смена центров инноваций в области городского планирования и проектирования. Так, если в начале 2000-х стимулы исходили от региональных столиц, а также других крупных и средних городов России, то на современном этапе происходит попытка переноса лучших практик из Москвы на все города страны. Это реализуется в том числе через федеральные программы и национальные проекты, образовательные инициативы и приглашение столичных экспертов. Возникающее в результате перераспределение центр-периферийных взаимоотношений характеризуется, с одной стороны, рецентрализацией знаний, экспертизы и профессиональных ресурсов, а с другой – дальнейшей периферизацией нестоличного пространства с ослаблением локальной автономии и креативного потенциала.

**Ключевые слова:** городское планирование и проектирование; комфортный город; комфортная городская среда; мобильность политики; периферизация; Россия

**Цитирование:** Zupan D., Gunko M. (2019) The Comfortable City Model: Researching Russian Urban Planning and Design Through Policy Mobilities//Городские исследования и практики. Т. 4. № 3. С. 7–22.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17323/usp43201907-22>

## Источники

Афоничкин А. (2012) Человечные города//Проект Россия. Т. 64. № 2. С. 42.

Архсовет Москвы (2015) Презентация «Положения стандарта № 305-ПП». Режим доступа: <https://archsovet.msk.ru/presscenter/polozheniya-standarta-305-pp> (дата обращения: 29.05.2019).

Голдхоорн Б. (2007) В Москве нет концепции городского пространства//Проект Россия. Т. 43. № 1. С. 14–16.

Гунько М., Батунова Е. (2019а) Стратегия фонтанов и детских площадок. Часть 1. Режим доступа: <https://republic.ru/posts/93305> (дата обращения: 29.05.2019).

Гунько М., Батунова Е. (2019b) Стратегия фонтанов и детских площадок. Часть 2. Режим доступа: <https://republic.ru/posts/93329> (дата обращения: 29.05.2019).

Гунько М., Пивовар Г., Аверкиева К. (2019) Ревитализация в малых городах Европейской России (на примере Боровичей, Выксы и Ростова)//Известия РАН. Серия географическая. № 5. С. 18–31.

- Гунько М., Еременко Ю., Батунова Е. (2020) Стратегии планирования в условиях городского сжатия в России: исследование малых и средних городов//Мир России: Социология, этнология. Т. 29. № 3. С. 121–141.
- Залкинд Л., Торопушина Е. (2009) Жилищная политика России. Северное измерение. Апатиты: Кольского научного центра РАН.
- Зубаревич Н.В., Сафронов С.Г. (2013) Неравенство социально-экономического развития регионов и городов России 2000-х годов: рост или снижение?//Общественные науки и современность. № 6. С. 15–26.
- Квартал (2018) Правила, которые изменят жизнь к лучшему//Квартал. Как привлечь деньги в город. С. 5–28. Режим доступа: <https://media.strelka-kb.com/#/tab/84488506-3> (дата обращения: 29.05.2019).
- Не жить на выселках: как Путин поручил преобразить российские города (2019)//Газета.ru. Режим доступа: <https://www.gazeta.ru/business/2019/02/18/12192823.shtml> (дата обращения: 16.09.2019).
- Нилина Н. (2013) Стратегический мастер-план города Перми как зеркало градостроительной деятельности в России. Режим доступа: <http://www.archi.ru/russia/48274/strategicheskii-master-plan-goroda-Permi-kak-zerkalo-gradostroitelnoi-deyatelnosti-v-rossii> (дата обращения: 08.09.2012).
- Пашинцева Т. (2007) Первые опыты национального проекта//Проект Россия. Т. 45 № 3. С. 198–201.
- Петрова Е. (2018) Новые архитекторы: кто будет развивать города России//Газета.ru. Режим доступа: [https://m.gazeta.ru/social/2018/10/17/12025333.shtml?fbclid=IwAR2SvZiNStqAS2wmxq-92DZ1C\\_ХКМНФvgzF5hYmZl2jqQhVgXU6D\\_-iVw](https://m.gazeta.ru/social/2018/10/17/12025333.shtml?fbclid=IwAR2SvZiNStqAS2wmxq-92DZ1C_ХКМНФvgzF5hYmZl2jqQhVgXU6D_-iVw) (дата обращения: 23.10.2018).
- Правительство Москвы (2014) Программа развития Москвы «Москва – город, удобный для жизни». Режим доступа: <http://s.mos.ru/common/upload/M2025.pdf> (дата обращения: 25.08.2015).
- Правительство Российской Федерации (2019) Стратегия пространственного развития Российской Федерации на период до 2025 года. Режим доступа: <http://static.government.ru/media/files/UVALqUt-T08o60RktoOXl22JjAe7irNxc.pdf> (дата обращения: 25.03.2020).
- Приоритетный проект «Формирование комфортной городской среды» (2017). Режим доступа: <http://www.minstroyrf.ru/trades/gorodskaya-sreda/strategicheskoe-napravlenie-razvitiya-zhkhk-i-gorodskaya-sreda/> (дата обращения: 25.03.2020).
- ПР – Проект Россия (2006) Человек с осмысленным лицом. Круглый стол о месте архитектора в современной России//Проект Россия. Т. 40. № 2. С. 149–152.
- Стрелка КБ (2016) Сводный стандарт благоустройства улиц Москвы. Режим доступа: [https://www.mos.ru/upload/newsfeed/newsfeed/160927\\_book\\_standard\\_small\\_final.pdf](https://www.mos.ru/upload/newsfeed/newsfeed/160927_book_standard_small_final.pdf) (дата обращения: 25.03.2020).
- Суворова Н., Мудрый С. (2017) Исследование: как устроен бизнес «Стрелки». Режим доступа: <https://incrossia.ru/fly/issledovanie-kak-ustroen-biznes-strelki/> (дата обращения: 29.05.2019).
- Badyina A., Golubchikov O. (2005) Gentrification in Central Moscow – A Market Process or a Deliberate Policy?//Geografiska annaler. Vol. 87. Vol. 2. P. 113–129.
- Batunova E., Gunko M. (2018) Urban Shrinkage: An Unspoken Challenge of Spatial Planning in Russian Small and Medium-Sized Cities//European Planning Studies. Vol. 26. No. 8. P. 1580–1597.
- Bazhenova E.S., Kostina E.G. (2002) Low-Rise Housing – Myth and Reality//Project Russia. Vol. 25. P. 53–56.
- Belov A. (2002) New Standards//Project Russia. Vol. 77. No. 3. P. 57.
- Bokova A. (2009) Shaping the Urban Fabric: The Future of Residential Unit//Project Russia. Vol. 52. No. 2. P. 68–79.
- Bokov A. (2010) The New Pragmatism and the Old City//Project Russia. Vol. 57. No. 3. P. 108–109.
- Brade I. (2002) Der Wandel der Russischen Städte in Den 1990er Jahren. Einführungen zum thema//Die Städte Russlands im Wandel. Raumstrukturelle Veränderungen am Ende des 20. Jahrhunderts/Brade I. (Hrsg.). Leipzig: Institut für Länderkunde. P. 12–19.
- Brade I., Rudolph R. (2004) Moscow, the Global City? The Position of the Russian Capital within the European System of Metropolitan Areas//Area. Vol. 36. No. 1. P. 69–80.
- Büdenbender M., Zupan D. (2017) The Evolution of Neoliberal Urbanism in Moscow, 1992–2015//Antipode. Vol. 49. No. 2. P. 294–313.
- Chirkunov O. (2010) Interview With Oleg Chirkunov: “In a City there Should be Life”//Project Russia. Vol. 56. No. 2. P. 60–62.
- Copus A.K. (2001) From Core-Periphery to Polycentric Development: Concepts of Spatial and Aspatial Peripherality//European Planning Studies. Vol. 9. No. 4. P. 539–552.
- Fischer-Tahir A., Naumann M. (eds.) (2013) Peripheralization. The Making of Spatial Dependencies and Social injustice. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- French R. (1995) Plans, Pragmatism and People. The Legacy of Soviet Planning for today's Cities. London: UCL Press.
- Gelman V. (2010) The Dynamics of Subnational Authoritarianism//Russian Politics & Law. Vol. 48. No. 2. P. 7–26.
- Gelman V., Ryzhenkov S. (2011) Local Regimes, Sub-National Governance and the 'Power Vertical' in Contemporary Russia//Europe-Asia Studies. Vol. 63. No. 3. P. 449–465.
- Gelman V. (2018) Bringing Actors back in: Political Choices and Sources of Post-Soviet Regime Dynamics//Post-Soviet Affairs. Vol. 34. No. 5. P. 282–296.
- Golubchikov O. (2010) World-City-Entrepreneurialism: Globalist Imaginaries, Neoliberal Geographies, and the Production of New St Petersburg//Environment and Planning A. Vol. 42. No. 3. P. 626–643.

- Golubchikov O., Badyina A., Makhrova A. (2014) The Hybrid Spatialities of Transition: Capitalism, Legacy and Uneven Urban Economic Restructuring//Urban Studies. Vol. 51. No. 4. P. 617–633.
- Gordeev S. (2010) Interview with Sergey Gordeev: The Problems of Russian Cities are not Unique//Project Russia. Vol. 56. No. 2. P. 63–68.
- Gunko M., Medvedev A. (2018) Dull Place or Green Idyll: Local Identity and Migration Intentions of Small City Youth//Tijdschrift Voor Economische En Sociale Geografie. Vol. 109. No. 5. P. 661–676.
- Kalyukin A., Borén T., Eyerley A. (2015) The Second Generation of Post-Socialist Change: Gorky Park and Public Space in Moscow//Urban Geography. Vol. 36. No. 5. P. 674–695.
- Kangas A. (2013) Governmentalities of Big Moscow: Particularising Neoliberal Statecraft//Geopolitics. Vol. 18. No. 2. P. 299–314.
- КСАР (2012) Transforming the City. Perm Strategic Masterplan. Режим доступа: [https://www.kcap.eu/en/projects/v/perm\\_strategic\\_masterplan/](https://www.kcap.eu/en/projects/v/perm_strategic_masterplan/) (дата обращения: 17.02.2020)
- Kinossian N. (2017a) State-Led Metropolisation in Russia//Urban Research & Practice. Vol. 10. No. 4. P. 466–476.
- Kinossian N. (2017b) Re-Colonising the Arctic: The Preparation of Spatial Planning Policy in Murmansk Oblast, Russia//Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space. Vol. 35. No. 2. P. 221–238.
- Korobina I. (2008) City Development in Russia: What Do We Expect from the Authorities?//Project Russia. Vol. 49. No. 3. P. 106–109.
- Kühn M. (2015) Peripheralization: theoretical Concepts Explaining Socio-Spatial inequalities//European Planning Studies. Vol. 23. No. 2. P. 367–378.
- Medvedkov Y., Medvedkov O. (2007) Upscale Housing in Post-Soviet Moscow and Its Environs//The Post-Socialist City/K. Stanilov (ed.). Dodrecht: Springer. P. 245–265.
- Molodikova I., Makhrova A. (2007) Urbanization Patterns in Russia in the Post-Soviet Era//The Post-Socialist City/K. Stanilov (ed.). Dodrecht: Springer. P. 53–70.
- Muratov A. (2010a) Housing//Project Russia. Vol. 55. No. 1. P. 65–67.
- Muratov A. (2010b) Perm //Project Russia. Vol. 56. No. 2. P. 57–59.
- Muratov A. (2011) Grands Projets//Project Russia. Vol. 60. No. 2. P. 73–75.
- Muratov A. (2012) Heritage//Project Russia. Vol. 65. No. 3. P. 81–83.
- Nagy E., Timár J. (2017) The (Re-)Production of Peripherality in Central and Eastern Europe//European Spatial Research and Policy. Vol. 24. No. 2. P. 5–16.
- Peck J., Theodore N. (2010) Mobilizing Policy: Models, Methods and Mutations//Geoforum. Vol. 41. P. 169–174.
- Peck J., Theodore N. (2015) Fast Policy: Experimental Statecraft At the Thresholds of Neoliberalism. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Pfoser A. (2018) Narratives of Peripheralisation: Place, Agency and Generational Cohorts in Post-industrial Estonia//European Urban and Regional Studies. Vol. 25. No. 4. P. 391–404.
- Poscopp – Research Group Production of Space in the Context of Polarisation and Peripheralisation (2015) Understanding New Geographies of Central and Eastern Europe//Understanding New Geographies of Central and Eastern Europe: Socio-Spatial Polarization and Peripheralization in a Rapidly Changing Region/T. Lang, S. Henn, E. Kornelia, W. Sgibnev (eds.). Basingstoke: Palgrave. P. 1–24.
- PR – Project Russia (1995) Round Table: Architecture in a Post-totalitarian Society//Project Russia. Vol. 1. No. 1. P. 6–12.
- PR – Project Russia (2008) New Cities: pro et contra. a Questionnaire by PR//Project Russia. Vol. 48. No. 2. P. 90–101.
- Revzin G. (1997) Negation as a Positive Program//Project Russia. Vol. 5. P. 73–75.
- Revzin G. (1999) Interview with Yury Gnedovskiy//Project Russia. Vol. 13. P. 17–20.
- Revzin G. (2000) City inside Out. Urban Renewal in Nizhni Novgorod//Project Russia. Vol. 17. P. 41–48.
- Rose N. (1999) Power of Freedom. Reframing Political Thought. Cambridge: University Press.
- Sharafutdinova G. (2010) Subnational Governance in Russia: How Putin Changed the Contract with his Agents and Problems it Created for Medvedev//Publicus. Vol. 40. No. 4. P. 672–696.
- Sharafutdinova G. (2013) Gestalt Switch in Russian Federalism: The Decline in Regional Power under Putin//Comparative Politics. Vol. 45. No. 3. P. 357–376.
- Shchukin A. (2014) Urban Block as Anti-mikrorajon//Project Russia. Vol. 73. No. 3. P. 136–139.
- Stanilov K. (2007) Taking Stock of Post-Socialist Urban Development: a Recapitulation//The Post-Socialist City/K. Stanilov (ed.). Dodrecht: Springer. P. 3–17.
- Tatunashvili N. (2011) Alternative Street Block//Project Russia. Vol. 60. No. 2. P. 158–159.
- Temenos C., Mccann E. (2013) Geographies of Policy Mobilities//Geography Compass. Vol. 7. No. 5. P. 344–357.
- Trubina E. (2015) Configuring Center-Periphery Relations: Relational Legacy in the Over-Centralized State//Journal of Architecture and Urbanism. Vol. 39. No. 1. P. 28–36.
- Vendina O.I. (1997) Transformation Processes in Moscow and Intra-Urban Stratification of Population//Geographical. Vol. 42. No. 4. P. 349–363.
- Zupan D. (2015) Local Debates on 'Global' Planning Concepts: the 'Compact European City' Model in Post-socialist Russia – the Case of Perm//Europa Regional. Vol. 22. No. 1–2. P. 39–52.
- Zupan D., Büdenbender M. (2019) Moscow Urban Development. Neoliberal Urbanism and Green infrastructures//Postsocialist Urban infrastructures/T. Tuvikene, W. Sgibnev Neugebauer C. (eds.). London: Routledge. P. 125–141.