

## **RESEARCH REPORT: “Intra-*oblast* migration patterns and the formation of a Post-Soviet Urban Hierarchy”**

The dissolution of the Former Soviet Union has caused an upheaval in a variety of regional processes, and the changes within the regions provide insight into the nature of the Russian transition as a whole. My research will analyze two aspects of regional change since 1991: internal migration patterns and reorientation of planning initiatives towards local needs. My intention is to both describe the phenomena and identify the linkages between the migrant’s decision to move and the process of developing the local development plan for each city. While in Irkutsk from July-November 2000, I collected data concerning 1) internal migration statistics from the Oblast Statistical Committee and 2) interviews of local practitioners from cities within the *oblast*. The details of these two sources of data are discussed below.

### *Internal migration*

In-migrants and out-migrants are required to fill out a registration form (*propiska* and *vypiska* respectively), which in Irkutsk contains 22 demographic and geographic pieces of information. The data include age, sex, place of birth, previous (or future) place of residence, length of stay, reason for leaving, occupation, education, marital status, and number of children. Although registration by in-migrants and out-migrants occurs at the local Passport-Visa Office, all statistical information within the *oblast* is subsequently sent to the Oblast State Statistical Committee (*Oblastnoi komitet gosudarstvennoi statistiki*, OBLKOMSTAT) on a monthly basis. Due to space limitations, however, Oblkomstat only archives 7 items from the *propiska* and *vypiska* forms (age, sex, year of birth, previous and current place of residence, reason for leaving, marital status). For my purposes, the omitted information is crucial for controlling the various rival explanations for the migrant’s decision to move: namely social ties (place of birth) and socioeconomic status (occupation/education). Unfortunately, I was not granted permission to take a sample the actual forms in order to collect the data myself.

Despite these data-collection hindrances, I was able to gather a sample of individual-level data (i.e. the 7 items of information for each in-migrant) over three years, 1997-1999, as well as aggregate data over a 20-year span (1979-1999) for the 13 independent urban areas in the *oblast*. Included in the individual-level data are pairs of origin and destination cities, which is one of many linkages between urban areas that create the urban system within the region. During the Soviet period, linkages between urban areas predominately followed the political chain of command. Analysis of this data will show whether the prior hierarchical network has yielded some horizontal ties based on geographic proximity or economic compatibility rather than political authority. The aggregate data shows general trends in regional population growth and redistribution. The Irkutsk Oblast, like most other Siberian regions, has experienced net out-migration since the latest census in 1989<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> All intercensal data is estimated, however, I was not provided the exact method of estimation for population size. Although I was collecting data straight from the “source”, the quality of the data is highly suspect. For example, given the fact that births, deaths, in-migration and out-migration are all registered, yearly change in population could simply be estimated by summing the number of births and in-migrants while subtracting the number of deaths and out-migrants. Even

Three-quarters (11 out of 13) of the cities in this region were both created and incorporated during the Soviet period, of which one-half came into existence on the basis of a single industrial plant since 1945. All of these post-WWII towns experienced rapid rates of population growth until the *perestroika* and *glasnost* programs of the mid-1980's. I used longitudinal population statistics for each urban area to identify different categories of towns: those that were growing prior to 1991 but subsequently declining, those that were growing both before and after 1991, and those that were growing prior to 1991 yet stagnated afterwards. Using this delineation, I interviewed chief architects from towns in each category. For my dissertation, I plan to write detailed descriptions about the five towns that I visited (Irkutsk, Angarsk, Usole-Siberskoye, Zima and Sayansk) and how the planning process has changed in each one.

### *Interviews of Chief Architects*

To understand how the process of planning has changed since the dissolution, I interviewed key planning officials in each city, particularly the chief architect (*glavnii arhitekt*), who is responsible for the execution of the general development plan (*genplan*). During the Soviet period, the *genplan* for all cities in the U.S.S.R was a comprehensive document created by the Institute of the General Plan in either Moscow or Leningrad. This was an essentially technocratic process where regional inputs, such as population size or natural resources, along with national objectives were used to generate a comprehensive schedule for development over a 25-year period. According to local practitioners, the *genplan* was considered to be a conceptual document at a rather high level of project detail. The chief architect of each city had some room to maneuver within the high-level details in order to appease local residents. For example, in the city of Irkutsk, the 1970 general plan called for the construction of a bridge over the Irkut River. The actual location of the bridge, which was conceived of in Moscow, would have interfered with the makeshift irrigation system by private farmers just north of the city. Because of protests by the farmers, the chief architect repositioned the location of the bridge to avoid the contested area<sup>2</sup>.

With the emphasis on small-city development in the U.S.S.R. beginning in the 1960's, the corresponding number of total *genplans* throughout the country grew, so that regional institutes aside from those in Moscow and Leningrad gained the authority to create development plans for new towns. In Irkutsk, the Institute for Civil Projects (*Institut Grazhdan Proyekt*) produced plans for several cities within the *oblast*, ensuring that it met the architectural standards of the State Construction Committee (Gosstroj).

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the validity of the *genplan* seriously came into question. On the one hand, as private land ownership and development proliferated, the plan itself was nearly defunct because land use and population size no longer matched the specifications of the plan. The most acute example is that of the town of Sayansk, for which the first cornerstone was placed in 1970. The city was primarily to be the bedroom community for the aluminum factory in the older city of Zima. Sayansk was scheduled to achieve a population size of 250,000, but by the mid-1980's had

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for estimates during the Soviet period, this simple equation did not add up. The error in estimation is corrected during years of the census: 1970, 1979, and 1989.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with the Deputy Chief Architect, City of Irkutsk, October 20, 2000

only finished building one-quarter of the 1970 *genplan*. Local planners have resigned themselves to the fact that the rest of the city, as originally planned, will never exist. On the other hand, a certain sense of development euphoria among the new landowners and developers caused a backlash to the rigid restrictions of planning in general. Many of the *genplans* from the 1970's were technically still valid until the mid-1990's, however, few people chose to build according to plan. This rebuff was largely sanctioned by local mayors interested in gaining favor with the relatively wealthy class of urban citizens. During this period, many cities witnessed the rise of unplanned private 'cottages' and informal garages that share little coherence with the surrounding area.

Today, the decision to create a new *genplan* is left up to the discretion of each city's mayor and *duma*. Until very recently, the appropriation of funds to pay for a new *genplan* was given very low priority due to the various fiscal constraints placed upon local budgets. However, three areas of planning have emerged to reconstitute interest for more predictability in land usage through efforts of a future-minded city administration. First, the number of private car ownership has risen tenfold in the past decade, which has led to acute traffic and congestion problems. Transportation planning has come to the fore in local politics, to the point where candidates are using such issues in their bids for office. Second, historic preservation of previously neglected architecture, such as pre-1917 memorials, church interiors, wooden architecture, or historic 'creation' in the newer cities has become important to many local groups. In the city of Irkutsk, the entire center section of town has been designated as the *historic district*, which has led to both a development moratorium and the reconstruction of several 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings. Third, issues that can be combined under the broad term of neighborhood planning are becoming more important for residents and in-migrants. For example, in Soviet era housing estates, the first floor of all buildings were to be reserved for 'communal' living. These spaces have now become prime locations for retailers of consumer goods, and residents are complaining about late-night sellers of alcohol and other things that attract a less desirable clientele. Also, the availability of affordable housing is one of the primary determinants of migration, and cities that are able to provide a descent stock in a strategic location (i.e. close to the center) are the recipients of migrants from throughout the region.

Although the Institute of Civil Projects (ICP) in Irkutsk does not have a monopoly in the region for creating *genplans*, its status as a joint-stock company<sup>3</sup> affords it access to resources and expertise that other agencies do not have. Although the city of Irkutsk has not yet approved funds for a new *genplan*, ICP was commissioned to begin some preliminary studies of land use in the city. In the summer of 2000, ICP completed an analysis of heavily traveled roads and bottlenecks in the city's transportation system. This is essentially the first stage of the anticipated new *genplan* for the city.

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<sup>3</sup> Interview with Chief Architect of the Institute, October 31, 2000. Twenty percent of the company is owned by the Irkutsk regional government.