

## **Introduction:**

### **“Moscow – Post-Soviet Developments and Challenges”<sup>1</sup>**

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Russia has always been a highly centralized state, with the capital playing an exceptional economic, social, cultural and political role. Paradoxically, the post-Soviet economic transition not only did not reduce this primacy but, on the contrary, considerably strengthened Moscow’s hypertrophy. During the 1990s, political events in the capital (attempted coups d’etat in 1991 and 1993, the struggle between “reformers” and left-wingers) decided the trajectory of all of Russia, with most regions only observing with anxiety. Though its ratio of Russia’s total population is just less than 6%, the city contains more than half of the country’s banking activity, more than one-fifth of retail trade, and one-third of wholesale trade. Moscow has, to a large extent, monopolized the functions of a mediator between Russia and the world economy and has become by far the most important national node of financial flows. Even if the August 1998 financial crisis contributed to a certain improvement of the balance between the capital and the provinces, Moscow remains the major “exporter” of Russia’s primary exports (oil, gas, timber, gold, etc.) It is being transformed into a true global city (Gritsai 1996, 1997; Taylor 2000).

The average per capita income in Moscow is much higher than in any other of the 88 regions in Russia, more than twice as high as the second-highest, St. Petersburg. Moscow provides an example of post-Communist economic restructuring to the whole country and now contains the most sizeable new middle class. The streetscape of the capital has considerably changed during the last decade. In its downtown, contemporary offices are mushrooming, and historical buildings look fresh after recent renovation by private investors. At night, Moscow’s main avenues are brightly

illuminated by shining shop windows and advertising by global companies, provoking sharp envy from residents of many other Russian cities, which remain dark while suffering from municipal debts and power shortages. Is Moscow really the dominant player in the Russian economy, determining the orientation and the rates of national restructuring? How stable is the Moscow's "miracle"? What is the reverse side of the coin, the inequities and polarization that has become apparent in the past decade? These questions are increasingly at the center of discussions among politicians and academic specialists.

The economic and social costs of Moscow's rapid changes since 1991 are already clear. Moscow has definitely become a demographic "black hole". Mortality has exceeded fertility for a decade, the city's population is getting older and the decrease is compensated only by labor migration from most of the former Soviet republics, from other Russian regions, and even from some Third World countries. Most migrants live in Moscow illegally. These processes create tensions in the labor and housing markets and can potentially lead to ethnic and religious conflicts (see Vendina's article in this issue). Though the territorial differentiation in Moscow has not yet reached the scale of U.S. or even West European cities, the growing social polarization has already seen the creation of "gated communities" and may condemn the great majority of Muscovites to live in neglected and forgotten housing ghettos. Moreover, this polarization process risks perpetuating social contrasts in creating multi-standard systems of education and health care – separately for the richer and the poorer strata of society.

Moscow city authorities must tackle other problems. One of the most serious, requiring huge investment, is the housing stock, specifically the reconstruction of the physically obsolete and dilapidated housing, four-story apartment blocs (*Khrushchoby*) built in the 1960s. Moreover, the city lacks empty spaces for new residential developments and, thus, it is necessary to demolish old residential and industrial buildings or to shift industrial plants in order to intensify land uses. Another urgent problem is rapid automobilization, related to the insufficient capacity of the road network and of parking; constant traffic jams already render downtown Moscow almost inaccessible

by car on workdays. (See the paper in this issue by Bitjukova and Argenbright on the pollution effects of the growth in car ownership in the 1990s). Against this background, slow development of public transportation caused by inadequate investment seems to be especially pressing. The city government does not possess the financial means to build highways such as the Third Ring and, at the same time, to invest in extending the Metro (subway) and other public transportation. The city government under the leadership of Yuri Luzhkov (mayor since 1992) has pledged to continue to invest in prestigious projects to maintain Moscow's image and competitiveness as the Russian capital and a new global city.

Like any major city, Moscow has a complex structure that needs to be considered at different levels. First, at the global and macro-regional (Central-East European) scale, Moscow's relations are dominantly economic as part of a world city system (Taylor and Hoyler, 2000). Second, at the national scale, Moscow is both the federal capital and a subject of Russian Federation – here the emphasis is on its primacy and balancing of the differentiation that is becoming more apparent in the country. Third, at the regional scale, the Moscow agglomeration over-reaches the capital's city limits and issues about industrial re-location, regional transport, city-suburb relations, and the conversion of agricultural and forest zones to urban uses dominate. Fourth, at the city scale, the optimal combination that allows the city to assume its functions, to be competitive at the international scene, while still meeting the needs of its population, is still to be found. Finally, at the local (neighborhood) scale, Moscow is a relatively vast and heterogenous territorial unit, including 124 municipal districts (*rayoni*) (see Figure 1), which will soon become local governments possessing not only their elected assemblies, but also their own budgets. Geographical distributions of housing, jobs, services, financing, green spaces, etc. across these *rayoni* are likely to become more contentious and prominent.

To cope with the myriad of problems across a variety of scales, the city authorities need a long-term strategy. Obviously, the privileged (relative to the rest of the country) 1990s situation of the capital can change rapidly, as the turmoil that occurred after the financial crisis of August 1998

showed. The Russian federal government refuses to cover even a small part of Moscow's expenses as the national capital. Some large companies (important taxpayers) have already moved their registered headquarters out of the city and during the past two years, city officials complain that the city budget is becoming very tight. Discussions about Moscow's economic future can be summarized as the choice between different models of development that depend in turn on the model followed by Russia as a whole. If Russia remains dominantly an exporter of fuel and other raw materials and her manufacturing and, especially, high-tech industries decline further, there will obviously be much less opportunity for Moscow to realize its potential for innovation and to select a new, more balanced model of development. Simplifying, one can say that the future of Moscow can be based on one of three options – a) traditional manufacturing; b) a service economy - mainly banking and trade, and c) science, information processing and high tech industry. In other words, Moscow can develop as the capital of an open economy, thus continuing current trends, or as the center of national modernization. Before the collapse of the Soviet Union, more than one million people were engaged in Moscow in pure and applied research (one-quarter of all Soviet scholars). Though this pool of human capital is now considerably weakened, the Russian capital still ranks second among European cities by the number of citations in academic journals and monographs, thanks mainly to the sciences. To ensure a sustainable development, the city should promote these scientific innovation activities and extend them into high-tech manufacturing (Pchelintsev, 1999).

The authors of this special issue offer no solutions for the problems that Moscow is now facing. Rather, they analyze recent data showing the post-Soviet evolution of economic functions and social-territorial structures of the city from a perspective of its transformation into a global city. Radical shifts in the economic structure of the capital changed (but did not diminish) its impact on the urban environment. The theme of the changing sources of Moscow's environmental pollution (from stationary to automobiles) is developed in the paper by Viktoria Bitjukova and Robert Argenbright. Olga Vendina devotes her article to social geographical developments among Moscow's ethnic minorities and the related issue of growing ghettoization. Elena Shomina, Vladimir

Kolossov and Viktoria Shukhat analyze local community groups (non-governmental organizations) in Moscow as responses to changing neighborhood, especially housing conditions. In the first paper in this special issue, Vladimir Kolossov, Olga Vendina and John O'Loughlin examine the evidence for Moscow's claim to world-city status and the geography of business developments in the city since the end of the Soviet Union.

### **Soviet and Post-Soviet Research on Moscow.**

At the end of World War II, Moscow attracted the attention of Soviet geographers who began to study the unique problems of the capital. Human geographers were especially interested in studying the interaction between the capital and its region, and Moscow's impact on the surrounding territories of Central Russia. They delimited Moscow's influence according to different criteria - the radius of daily and weekly cycles of activity, the number of second residences, etc; and the distribution of built-up areas, industry, services and recreational functions by sectors around the city. The key volume on these themes, written by a large group from the Institute of Geography of the Soviet (now Russian) Academy of Sciences, include interesting chapters that serve as benchmarks for the post-Soviet developments (Lappo, Golz and Treivish, 1988). Geographers gave much less attention to Moscow itself. The social-territorial structure of the city was hardly examined – partly because of the lack of reliable statistical data for micro-districts. The problems of Moscow's development were analyzed mainly by architects and urban planners, especially those serving at the Institute of Moscow's General Plan; however, their reports are not available to the public.

Some general works containing detailed information on urban life at various periods of development are available. In particular, Yulian G. Saushkin, a patriarch of Soviet human geography and former chair of the Department of Human Geography of the USSR at Moscow State University, produced three books on Moscow (the last one appearing soon after his death with his former graduate student, Vera Glushkova) (Saushkin 1950, 1964, Saushkin and Glushkova 1983). In the late

1970s–early 1980s, new geographical approaches to the study of the local urban environment, the conditions of life and the functional organization of the municipal economy were developed, in particular, in a laboratory of the Institute of Geography founded by Yuri Medvedkov (now at Ohio State University). Contemporary quantitative methods (especially factorial ecology) were applied in the estimation of the quality of the urban environment (Barbash 1982; Barbash and Gutnov 1980). Examining patterns of distribution of residential areas and jobs, the number of requests to move into a specific area, proximity to major transportation lines, the convenience of transport connections, the presence of city-wide services, the variety of employment opportunities, and the ecological situation were used as measures of attractiveness (Barbash, 1984; Vasiliev and Privalova, 1984; Sidorov, 1992).

In the post-Soviet period, the transition to the market economy challenged geographers and other social scientists with new theoretical and policy problems: economic restructuring, the development of the privatized housing market, social polarization, unemployment, and old and new social pathologies all came to the forefront of research. Despite publication of a number of innovative works, it is hardly possible to conclude that Russian human geographers met these challenges. However, the works of Vera Glushkova should be noted. She published a monograph devoted to the dynamics and the composition of Moscow's population, the functions of the city and main branches of its economy, land-use and social topics, in particular, religious geography (Glushkova 1997, 1999). Glushkova also was one of the initiators and main authors of large, well-documented, illustrated volumes on the history, geography and urbanism in Moscow (see, for instance, Kuzmin 2000). The second edition of the Encyclopaedia "Moscow" is especially worth of notice (*Moskva*, 1997). Relevant geographical information on the development of Moscow is also contained in key historical publications (Vinogradov, 1997; Gorinov, 1996,1997).

A series of works on urbanism and architecture richly illustrated by detailed maps of the environment, roads, transportation, planning structure and functional zoning of the city appeared as a result of public discussions, the first steps in the adoption of the new General Plan of Moscow until 2020 (*Arkhitectura...* 1999, *Moskva...* 2000, *Moskva...*, 2001). Comprehensive studies of the history

of architecture and urbanism in the capital also appeared during the first post-Soviet decade (Kudriavtsev, 1994). Geographers participated during the 1990s in several important works on the environment in Moscow. In particular, Viktoria Bityukova's dissertation on the detailed spatial distribution of polluters and their distribution by administrative-territorial units was important (Moskva... 1995; Bityukova 1996; Kuzmin 2000). Some environmental maps can be found on the official website of the government of Moscow ([www.mos.ru](http://www.mos.ru)) and in Bityukova's paper with Robert Argenbright in this issue.

Geographical studies of Moscow were given further impetus by the improvement of official statistics, as well as by the 1995 decision of the capital's government to introduce a new instructional discipline in the city's and region's high schools – “knowledge of Moscow” (“*moskvovedenie*”). This educational policy spurred the appearance of a series of textbooks (for example, Alekseev, 1996; Alexseev, Glushkova and Lisenkova, 1997). Further, the city government of Moscow initiated the publication of two monthly journals that contain the results of social studies of the city (*Simptom* and *Puls*). The Committee on Telecommunications and Mass Media of the Government of Moscow yearly publishes about a dozen small books on current social problems, but unfortunately, only a very limited number of copies are printed and are not available in most libraries.

Outside of Russia, in his key work, Timothy Colton (1995) analyzed the dynamics of the city's boundaries, and its demographic, industrial and political patterns in Moscow in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Many academic journals, including *Post-Soviet Geography and Economy*, regularly publish papers on the human geography of the Russian capital. *GeoJournal* prepared a special issue on Moscow and St. Petersburg, containing papers on Moscow by Gdaniec (1997), Kolossov (1997) and Vendina (1997). In the field of social geography, Mozolin (1994) explained the intra-urban distribution of housing prices in terms of accessibility to the CBD and urban morphology. Bater (1994) and Daniell and Struyk (1994) analyzed the development of the housing market in Moscow and, in particular, the results of privatization of housing, the implementation of municipal housing programs under new conditions, and the construction of new one-family cottages by “new Russians”. Vendina (1994,

1995, 1996) and Vendina and Kolossov (1996) related the transformations of functions and employment in different districts of Moscow in the post-socialist years with the pattern of housing prices on the secondary market, while Gritsai (1997) compared the first results of market transformations in Moscow, especially the development of business services, to other global metropolises.

Post-Soviet developments in Moscow of demographic and social indicators (natural population change, ethnic composition and the level of education, especially during the 1979-1989 intercensal period in the old administrative districts abolished in 1992) were examined by Rowland (1992). Differences between the inner and the outer zones of the city and the concentration of the educated people in the center and the south-west were also considered in the analysis of the outcomes of the first democratic elections in the capital (Berezkin *et al.*, 1989 and Colton, 1995). Bater, Degtyarev and Amelin (1995) and Kolossov (1996, 1997) demonstrated that the voting behavior of Muscovites differs greatly from most other regions of the country and has stable territorial patterns, while the differences in electoral preferences between the west and south-west parts of the city with the remainder were defined and explained by O'Loughlin, Kolossov and Vendina (1997). More recently, Pavlovskaya and Hanson (2001) reported on the effects on family life of changes in the retail structure and privatization of services in a *rayon* in central Moscow and Argenbright (1999) paints an evocative picture of the changing nature of Moscow's public spaces, from controlled Soviet to the contemporary free-for-all.

### **Conclusion**

A visitor to Soviet Moscow would hardly recognize its successor. The center of Moscow increasingly looks like a Central European city, like Warsaw or Budapest, with expensive stores, galleries, supermarkets, commercial offices, and a full array of retail services. Meanwhile, the streetscapes of Moscow's outer zones are hardly changed from Soviet times. As a small segment of the population

of “new Russians” prosper in these times of frantic change, the majority of Moscovites struggle to make ends meet. In a sample of 3,500 Moscovites in April 2000, we found that only 22.8% agreed with the statement that “things are not so bad, and it is possible to live”, while the majority (55.3%) said that “life is difficult but it’s possible to endure”. Another 13.3% said that “our condition is impossible to endure further.” And, it is worth re-emphasizing that Moscow is much wealthier than the rest of the country and should not be considered as a typical Russian city or even a harbinger of things to come for other large cities of the former Soviet Union.

The frenetic pace of commercial life in central Moscow and the associated rush to gentrification and re-development, quick money, criminal activity, banking and financial scandals, and great uncertainties has produced a “city on the make” (Spector, 1997). What is most startling is the contrast of these world-city functions and consequences to the daily lives of most of the population. The ‘dual city hypothesis’ of Mollenkopf and Castells (1992), developed for New York City, seems increasingly apropos for Moscow. Of course, dramatic polarization is a persistent feature of many Third World capitals but its appearance in Moscow is undoubtedly the fastest. Whether the growing gaps in Moscow - between rich and poor, between the segments of the population who are tied to the incorporation into the global economy and those whose livelihood is connected to state services or to small-scale local enterprise, and between the older generation whose world is still colored by their Soviet-era experiences and the post-Soviet generation – will magnify as they have for the past decade or will be eased is an important research question, not only for Moscovites and Russians, but for all societies undergoing rapid social and economic change in these globalized times. The papers in this special issue contribute to this research and offer a picture of the city after 10 years of post-Soviet change against which future developments can be compared.

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**Figure 1: Location of Rayoni in Moscow**