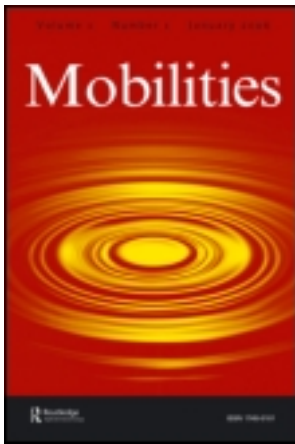


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Publisher: Routledge

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Mobilities

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rmob20>

The Culture of New Mobility in Russia: Networks and Flows Formation

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Available online: 19 Jan 2012

To cite this article: Vladimir Popov (2012): The Culture of New Mobility in Russia: Networks and Flows Formation, *Mobilities*, 7:1, 151-169

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17450101.2012.631816>

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The Culture of New Mobility in Russia: Networks and Flows Formation

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ABSTRACT *The paper considers the development of the culture of new mobility in Russia from the perspective of the quantitative analysis of the changes occurring in the structure of traffic movements and flows and communication using mobile phones, the internet, and other mobile gadgets. The culture of mobility is defined as a set of the interactions which are carried out apropos and during mobility. It is argued that the culture of new mobility in Russia is specified by the processes of 'individualization' and 'networked individualism'. This conclusion is inferred from the rapid growth of individualized automobility, from the considerable increase in international tourism and from the widespread prevalence of mobile gadgets as indispensable attributes of everyday life.*

KEY WORDS: Automobility; individualization; the internet; mobile phones; public transport

Introduction

The culture of new mobility developed in Russia rather later than in Western countries. The delay in this development was connected to the severe economic crisis of 1998–1999. Starting from 2003, there is evidence of the rapid growth in the quantitative characteristics of the modern hybrid system of mobility in Russia, which combines in a very specific way with the interaction of material and non-material, of human beings, their preconceptions, skills, technical equipment and everything that John Urry refers to as 'networks', 'fluids' and 'scapes' which are the necessary components of that hybrid system's mobility infrastructure.

Scapes are the networks of machines, technologies, organizations, texts and actors that constitute various interconnected nodes along which flows can be relayed. Such scapes reconfigure the dimensions of time and space. Once particular scapes have been established, then individuals and especially corporations within each society will normally try to become connected to them through being constituted as nodes within that particular network. (Urry, 2010, p. 355)

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1745-0101 Print/1745-011X Online/12/010151–19 © 2012 Taylor & Francis
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17450101.2012.631816>

The culture of mobility is defined as a set of interactions that are carried out apropos and during mobility. The new mobility culture, appearing simultaneously to the swift development of transport and communication technologies, is comprehensively characterized by the theses on 'individualization' (Beck *et al.*, 1994; Bauman, 2000) and 'networked individualism' (Wellman, 2001). Individualization shows itself by the liberation from historical forms and connections and by the loss of traditional stability and the creation of new ways of social integration (Beck, 2000, p. 189). Bauman emphasizes that the modern society lives in constant individualization as people's activities consist of everyday revision of interaction nets, unremitting changes of rules and norms of behaviour (Bauman, 2000, p. 31). Processes of individualization of social life in modern Russia especially impress against the background of its recent past as a part of the USSR. During that period, social life was characterized mainly by conformism and egalitarianism. The possibilities of travel abroad were severely limited. The principle of locality prevailed. Social interactions were limited to residences and places of employment. Social life as a whole was a rigid mechanism with invariable rules and norms. That social organization has strikingly changed in the last 20 years. The speed of change greatly increased with the rapid expansion of new information and communication technologies (ICT) and accompanied by processes of privatization, deregulation and foreign investment in the transport and ICT sectors. In many respects these processes have created institutional and material bases for the culture of new mobility, which as a whole reproduces the Western patterns. National specificity is shown only in a few aspects. They are connected essentially with a shorter time for development of this culture, and relative weakness of mobility infrastructure, especially automobility.

Progress in transport and communication technologies does not just connect people but also re-configures social networks, withdrawing them from the traditional limits of cities, regions and nations (Larsen *et al.*, 2006c, p. 10). Wellman's idea of 'networked individualism' refers to the fact that modern mobility means giving an individual hitherto unseen freedom of communication, making him an independent constructor of his own networks and connections. 'The person has become the portal' maintains Wellman (2001, p. 238). In the following discussion it will be shown that over the last decade the evolution of the modern hybrid mobility system in Russia leads to the mass dissemination of the culture of 'networked individualism' and is becoming an important dominant of sociocultural dynamics. The consequences of such sociocultural dynamics for social life are new forms and methods of coordinated interactions, the greater spatial scale and personalization of networks (Larsen *et al.*, 2006a), and the wider dissemination of situational forms of social solidarity (Filippov, 2009). In this work we will examine changes in the structure of transport travel as 'different modes of transport are not merely functional choices but reflect on different social choices' (Urry, 2002, p. 2). Transport preference changes in Russia are reflected by the decrease in the role of some traditional means of public transport and in the growing individualization of automobility travel. Another important trend is the growth of transnational flows that in turn form a culture of individual long-distance travel. Over the last few decades considerable numbers of Russian citizens have become acquainted with the role of the 'international tourist'.

The article's conclusions are based on the results of the research conducted by the Center of Fundamental Sociology, Moscow (CFS). The research task was formulated for the most part as a sociographical problem. It was also necessary to

track how theories of mobility could work in the Russian conditions and what sort of knowledge can be extracted. The starting point of the research was the recognition that wide use of mobile gadgets considerably changes social life. The culture of new mobility is not simply a set of values and norms but represents an ideal component of daily life that is interweaved with the practice of everyday events and processes and at the same time acts as a reference point in a choice of preference in polyoptional situations. The research involves two parts: an exploratory qualitative survey and collection, and analysis of statistical data. The main task of the qualitative survey consisted in finding out what occurs in social life with the resolute connection of the new communication media necessary for mobility, assuming mobility and to a certain extent imposing mobility. Human and information flows in the big city are a visible embodiment of mobility and they are provided with diverse technologies of mobility. In total, 21 respondents (10 men and 11 women aged 18–65 years, average age 36 years, all residents of Moscow) were interviewed. The sample was selected by the following criteria: driving experience (more than two years), use of a communication facility and navigation, regular active travelling in the city on personal and public transport. The interviews were conducted between June and July 2009.

The second part of the research consisted of an attempt to generalize some accessible statistical and other data testifying to objective parameters of mobility in Russia. This part of the research is important because it allows us to show the context to which the transformations studied by us are made. It is the context of all sorts of travels that relate basically to traditional ones, but in some way changing the meaning in new conditions. The collected statistical data has some limitations. Not all indicators that are valuable from the researcher's point of view are registered by the Federal State Statistical Service (FSSS). Only since 2003 is data on information and communication technologies regularly presented by the FSSS. The fullest data, allowing us to see long-term trends from the 1980s, are presented concerning only automobility and public transport. We focused on analysing the time series of the usage of different means of transport, the number of subscribers, the volume of mobile communication and data transmission services, as well as the internet access. We managed only to get separate and highly judgmental data on some points, particularly about the volume of data transmission and access to the internet and the usage of navigators in cars so it was impossible to draw the necessary time series.

In the first section we look into changes in the structure of public transport; the second is devoted to the analysis of automobility; the third covers the questions of transnational flows and the forming of the culture of international tourism; the fourth deals with mobile communications and the internet.

Changes in the Structure of Public Transport in Russia

Transport, and its infrastructure, is the physical travel environment. 'Much travel stems from the "compulsion to proximity", the desire and need to be corporeally co-present with distanced significant others, whether they are colleagues, business partners, friends, partners or family members, or to be present at specific timed events' (Larsen *et al.*, 2006b, p. 2). Transport thereby connects people and lets them organize social interactions which otherwise could not have occurred because of the

discouraging impossibility to overcome spatial restrictions. To some extent transport can be seen as a specific catalyst of face-to-face interactions. Like most catalysts, transport favours the increase of intensity of social interactions thus leading to new necessities, wishes and obligations and the need to coordinate further actions. New necessities and obligations in turn cause the increase in transport usage. Step by step new interaction systems form the basis of differentiated positive feedbacks: transportation inspires an increase in the number of contacts, and therefore the development of relationships and the maintenance of social connections increase the use of means of transport. As a result, a special closed self-organizing autopoietic system appears which is oriented towards extended reproduction (Luhmann, 1984).

As Flamm and Kaufmann (2006, p. 178) maintain, ‘Generally, transportation modes can be considered instrumental resources that people take advantage of to travel, in order to either satisfy desires or fulfill obligations’. Thus, social preferences of a particular means of transportation are connected with various ways in the organization of daily life, with overall lifestyle. Using Urry’s terminology, transportation modes are one of the varieties of ‘scapes’ within which flows are organized (Urry, 2010, p. 35). In turn, flows are formed by people moving from one place to another. During certain time intervals, structural analysis of this environment indicates different social choices and defines the intensity and prevalence of different means of transport in the flows’ organization. As a result, it is possible to estimate how the society’s functioning becomes dependent on spatial travel and how lifestyles change, if at all.

Public transport in Russia has traditionally occupied a central position in organizing business and private communication. Historically, social life in many places concentrated mainly on big railway junctions and way stations. Choice in the means of travelling from one place to another was limited. This situation changed when public buses appeared, became widespread, broadened the geography and increased the intensity of travel. From the 1980s up until 1990, public transport use had grown considerably (Figure 1).¹

After the fall of the USSR in 1991, and throughout the entire 1990s, Russia went through a severe economic crisis. The well-being of the Russian people had been severely undermined, and the population reduced by 6 million (FSSS, 2009). Since 1990 public transport use substantially decreased, forming an obvious

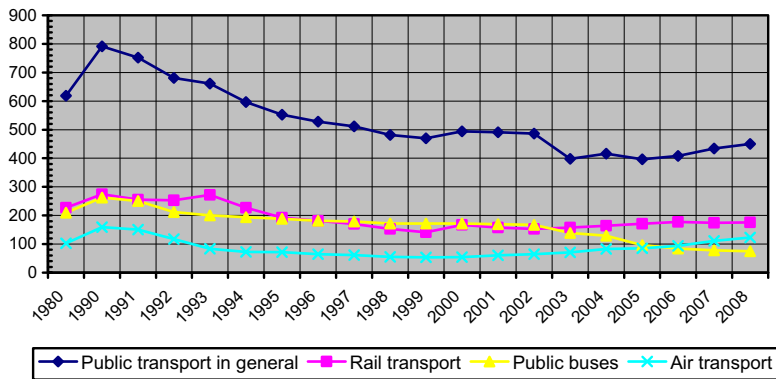


Figure 1. Passenger turnover dynamics in the structure of public transport (billions of passenger kilometres).
Source: FSSS (2009).

descending trend, with the least use being reached in 2003. However, during the economic crisis the provision of motor cars steadily grew. Ultimately, the accelerated growth of automobility at the beginning of the twenty first century introduced considerable changes in the structure of transport, and the choice in the means of travel became more diverse and individual. Flows of people became more dispersed and intense. The public transport dynamic (air and rail transport except for buses) in 2003–2008 reveals a modest uptrend. Even though in 2005 this dynamic slowed down somewhat, the general trend shows a growing intensity in public transport usage. During 2003–2008, the passenger turnover grew by 13%.

Since 2003, noticeable changes occurred within the structure of public transport in Russia. First, the importance of rail transport as a means of travel rose. From 2003–2008, the passenger turnover here increased by 11.5%. Though, after 2006, this growth held up. Still, there is no reason to speak of regarding the change in trend. Rail transport has always been very important in Russia. It is often the only option of getting from one place to another, especially when the destinations are remote, which is typical of a vast territory such as Russia. This circumstance is conditional on the historic trend in the development of the Russian transport system, where rail transport has played and now plays the key role. Pflieger *et al.*, (2009) and Urry (2004) also emphasize the importance of historic factors in transport development.

Second, a markedly different situation can be seen in the passenger turnover dynamics of public automobile transport, in particular, buses. A notable downtrend describes the period since 1991 and especially between 2003–2008. The usage of public buses and trolleybuses as means of transport reduced significantly. The indicator representing public bus passenger turnover from 2003–2008 collapsed by 46%. This collapse can partly be explained by the crisis of state and municipal transport companies which, in many cases, lost the competition with private companies that stake on flexible passenger transportations by taxibuses.²

Third, the importance of air transport in Russia grew swiftly after the economic crises of the 1990s. In the period 2003–2008 passenger turnover grew by 72.5%. No doubt, such impressive growth is connected with the increase in international travel by Russians, with the rapid development and popularity of air tourist travel which is an important part of the new mobility culture. The growing popularity of air travel lies in the expansion of the geography of travel and the stable tendency to shorten travel times in preference for frequency of flights (the growing number of short-term long-distance tours). For example, during the last 5 years, three out of four Moscow airports underwent reconstruction that subsequently enlarged their carrying capacity.

Thus, transport which allowed more flexible and individualized travel started to play a significant role, whereas some traditional means of travel such as buses became less attractive and fell into decay. These circumstances indicate tangible shifts in everyday life, primarily in the way face-to-face interactions are organized. The latter became more heterogeneous and dependant on the possibilities offered by more flexible means of transport.

Automobility in Russia

As the passenger turnover of public buses decreased, more people have obtained private cars. This undoubtedly signals the expansion of automobility culture in

Russia and the continuous ascending trend of automobility can be traced from the 1980s. From the beginning of 2003 this trend noticeably amplifies. Essentially cars became more accessible, unlike the crisis period of 1990s. At that time, 90% of cars were bought by the tenth of the population representing the highest earners (Karamurza, 2002, p. 131). Since 2003 this ratio began to vary in the process of growth of the economy, the standard of well-being of the population, the development of credit mechanisms and the subsequent stimulation of demand. Automobility is developing within a framework of constantly rising costs in automobile production. This tendency is characteristic not only of Russia, but also for many Western countries, as it has been shown by many researchers, particularly Cohen (2006) and Hagman (2006). The relative cost of a car in Russia is high compared to the average salary. Interest on credit usually accounts for 10–15% per annum, which is more than in most western countries. Whilst service and running costs are also high, motor transport taxes and insurance rates continue to grow. Things are hardly better in terms of the external costs of automobility: road infrastructure running costs are extremely high and new roads are built very slowly. Russia occupies one of the top positions in the world in the number of car accidents and cost of medical treatment after accidents. On the whole, the culture of driving cars in Russia is characterized by the unfairly high propensity to risk in behaviour on roads, as well as frequent and, at times, deliberate traffic infractions. This is reflected in a high death rate as a result of car accidents. So, in 2007 in Russia, on average four times more people per one million people were killed in road accidents, in comparison with leading countries of Western Europe, and approximately two times more in comparison with the countries of Central Europe and the USA.³ In most cities, car drivers lose plenty of time in traffic jams and always have trouble finding a parking place. For instance, CFS research in Moscow showed that morning and evening rush hours force people with flexible working schedules to plan their day so that they can avoid moving around at these hours (Chlevnuk, 2009).⁴

Despite all these drawbacks, automobility in Russia showed a surprising growth in the last 8–10 years. At the same time it is complicated to find a satisfactory explanation as to why people prefer cars to other means of transport, taking into account the high costs of buying and service, higher incident risks and damage to one's own health and that of the people around (Orlov, 2007). Urry supposes the attractiveness of travelling by car lies in the fact that it offers 'jointless' routes. It is possible to get anywhere anytime by car. Moreover, there is no need to change transport and thus adapt to the transport schedule (Urry, 2004). According to the CFS research results, Russian drivers when interviewed point out psychological and instrumental reasons for having and using a car in the first place and these outweigh the costs, risks and potential danger of driving. The advantages are a sense of freedom of travel and an increase in resources (Fen, 2009). The obtained data in many respects agreed with T. Sager's observation that 'mobility is created by overcoming friction measured as physical distance, costs, or other variables indicating inertia or resistance. The defeat of friction might be associated with more freedom in the sense of an expanded set of available opportunities, as friction is seen as a constraint that is relaxed' (Sager, 2006, p. 467). Thus, a higher level of mobility corresponds to a higher level of the aspect of freedom expanding possibilities of social actions in polyoptional situations. And in the background there remains what Orlov (2007, p. 3) describes as 'resignation to the inevitable evil.' 'In a car-dependent society, millions of people are at all times actively involved in the act of avoiding

instant death. In due course, cars and the carnage they produce come to be regarded as forces of nature'. The next quotation from the interview comprehensively shows these attitudes of Moscow car drivers:

... if you have car it gives you a certain degree of freedom, that's it: you always know that you can go out any time and get to the place... you might spend some more time on going around but you are free and in principle after you get some driving experience and experience in moving around Moscow you drive out and calculate in advance. Delays happen quite seldom. And because of the things I do I have to move around a lot: for meetings and all things like that, so I have to carry documents, signs, and such... Public transport doesn't give such freedom. Elementarily carrying a laptop around – that makes you think. (Man, 33 years old)

The value of efficient time use according to the CFS research is one of the key characteristics of the approach to the new culture of mobility (Chlevnuk, 2009). Although, because of the complicated transport situation for automobility in Moscow, this sometimes turns out to be not the most rational way of travel. The advantages of automobility along with new mobile technologies are quite considerable in situations where there are constant changes of plan and setting of meetings. As one of the CFS research respondents said:

Without a car I wouldn't be able to do as much as I usually do now. Whatever they say about traffic jams, I travel around lots of places and I spend a lot. If I didn't have a car, I'd spend lots of strength on going by the underground and then by bus and then to and fro, so sometimes it's faster to go from Vodnyi Stadion to Tverskaya by car than every station by the underground. That's why I think with a car it's much better, easier and more comfortable. (Cristina, 22 years old)

The characteristic feature of the culture of mobility in such a megalopolis as Moscow now is the perception of an automobile as something taken for granted, not just an object of prestigious consumption as it was some two decades ago in Russia. Urry reports that: 'Much of what many people now think of as "social life" could not be undertaken without the temporal flexibilities of the car and its availability 24 hours a day' (Urry, 2002, p. 4). From 2003–2008, the provision of private cars indicator grew by 40%. It is necessary to note that the ascending trend of automobility is traced in Russia since the 1980s, but during this period it receives notable acceleration. To all signs, automobility in Russia is built as 'a self-organizing autopoietic, non-linear system that generates the preconditions for its own self-expansion' (Urry, 2004, p. 27). According to Urry, nowadays the automobile is the main product of individual consumption, the main means of obtaining 'quasi-private' mobility and the most important socializing and cultural instrument (Urry, 2004, p. 26). The events seen during the period under review, in particular for the last eight years, confirm Urry's premises. Since 2003, the automobile market in Russia has started to develop rapidly. If in 2003, 1000 persons owned 161 units of cars; in 2008 this indicator had increased to 225 units (see Figure 2).

Following the quantitative changes there also appeared the qualitative ones. In the first place, new ways of interacting between car drivers lead among other

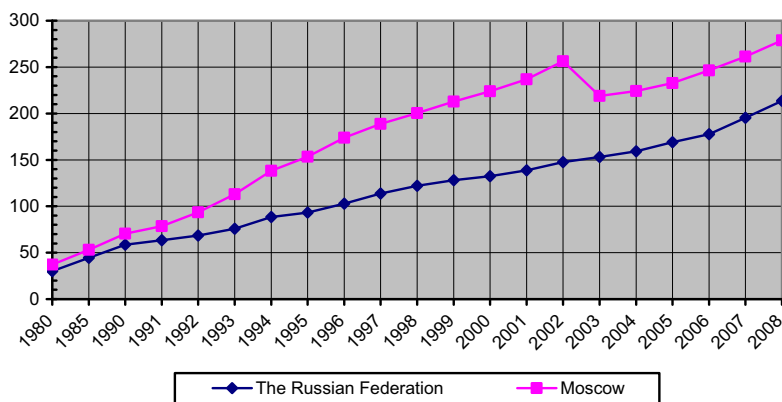


Figure 2. Dynamics of the population's provision of motor cars (pieces per 1000 people).
Source: FSSS (2009).

things to different forms of solidarity, self-awareness as a kind of community based on a common 'field of meanings' (Komarova, 2009). Filippov characterizes these processes as the development of 'situational forms of solidarity' which start to play an increasing role in social life (Filippov, 2009). The reason for the formation of such transient forms of solidarity may be a variety of motives that may serve as a basis for building a common identity in different situations. Sheller and Urry (2003, p. 115) emphasize that 'an automobile constructs the civil society of hybrid car drivers', moving separately on their own accord and excluding everyone without a car or rights from the public sphere of the automobile domineering. In this civil society, each driver has the right to go everywhere and anytime he (she) wants. However, as the CFS research indicated, a group of drivers is not exhaustively defined by the presence of a legitimate right for free individual travel, it also has some elements of self-determination through self-awareness as a community having a certain value, in spite of the fact that within a spatially limited city they become competitors for a place both on the roads and for parking places (Komarova, 2009). In many situations, Russian drivers as a rule render mutual support to each other, which is caused first of all by the common identity and value of community on the road.

It is necessary to mention that there were also other important social and economical changes that contributed to this ascending trend of automobility such as the growth of money stock, easier access to credit and an increase in the volume of energy resources available, which is absolutely necessary for expansive development of both the automobility and transport systems.⁵ So, in the period under review, individualization of travel takes place in Russia. Even though public transport, except for bus transfer, is still important and air travel is gaining popularity, automobility has become the significant factor of travel.

Thus, during the period 2003–2008, the role of automobility in the structure of the modern means of transport rose increasingly. Rail travel grew as well but its passenger turnover dynamics were much slower than those of automobility and air transport, whereas the dynamics of bus traffic were negative. The data given enables the claim that the prevailing cultural trend is travel individualization, which is reflected by the substantial growth of automobility and long-distance travel.

Transnational Travel: Tourism as a Part of the New Mobility Culture in Russia

Globalization and the subsequent increase in transnational travel became indispensable attributes of modern societies. As Bauman claims,

There are no more 'natural borders' as there are no more obvious 'free places'. No matter where we are in the definite moment, we know that we could have been equally well in any other place. So we have fewer and fewer reasons to stay at any definite place (that's why we are often eager to find or make up such a reason). (Bauman, 2004, p. 113)

Even as recent as 20 years ago Russia, as a part of the former USSR, was a rather closed country from the viewpoint of organized tourist trips abroad. Tourist trips abroad (mostly to other socialist countries) were considered to be prestigious and available only to restricted groups of the population. Usually, trips abroad were business trips made by specialists. For the majority of the population only internal tourism was permitted. In the mid-1990s, the situation changed completely. The amount of internal tourism reduced noticeably and, at the same time, rather strong tourist flows abroad began to develop. Tourist trips abroad became more accessible both organizationally and financially to the majority of Russians, and became part of everyday life.

Transnational travel by the ever-growing number of travelling individuals agrees with the concept of global fluids: 'There are global fluids, the heterogeneous, uneven and unpredictable mobility of people, information, objects, money, images and risks, that move chaotically across regions in strikingly faster and unpredictable shapes. Such global fluids (as opposed to networks) demonstrate no clear point of departure or arrival, just de-territorialized movement or mobility (rhizomatic rather than arboreal)' (Urry, 2010, p. 356). In our analysis we examined only tourist travel which constitutes transnational travel and is unconnected to residence or job change.

The key indicators of transnational travel are the number of realized tourist vouchers and trips abroad. The data on realized tourist vouchers provided by the FSSS do not show how many of these refer to inland or foreign travel (see Figure 3). Nevertheless, this parameter can be controlled by the number of foreign trips and by the purpose of travel.

The graph shows that since 2004 there was a sharp increase in the dynamics of realized tourist vouchers which stopped in 2008, when the world financial crisis broke out. Although the general tourist travelling trend appears positive, some experts expect that the significant fall in the demand for tourist services seen at the end of 2008 is unlikely to continue into 2009 and the values will not be lower than in 2008.

The statistics on Russian citizens' foreign departures and the purpose of their visits show that there has been a steep rise in the number of long-distance and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) trips for private and tourist purposes (see Table 1).⁶ In 2003, there were 20.5 million trips, while in 2008 there were 36.5 million. The increment totaled 76.2%. In addition, by 2007, compared to 2003, the number of long-distance trips had started to overtake significantly the number of CIS trips. The overall number of private and tourist trips doubled

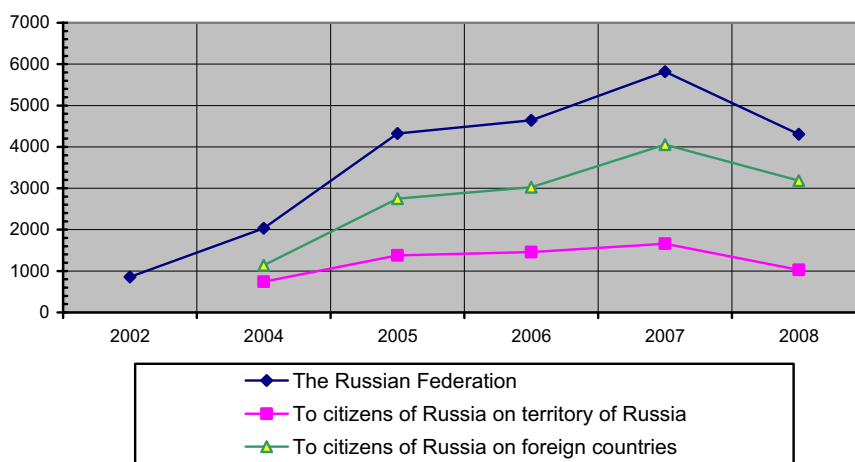


Figure 3. Dynamics of realized tourist vouchers (per 1000 pieces).
Source: FSSS (2009).

Table 1. Departure of Russian citizens abroad depending on the aims of trips (1000 trips).

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
<i>All countries</i>						
Total:	20468	24410	28476	29003	34218	36538
Also including the aims of trips:						
Business	2516	2285	2357	2340	2162	1968
Tourism	5640	6557	6785	7753	9368	11314
Private	10330	13604	17205	16957	20232	-
<i>Far-abroad</i>						
Total:	11645	13147	14838	15666	18690	-
Also including the aims of trips:						
Business	1985	1748	1864	1898	1712	-
Tourism	4615	5791	6405	7132	9039	-
Private	3614	4194	5149	5246	6070	-
<i>Commonwealth of Independent States</i>						
Total:	8823	11263	13638	13337	15528	-
Also including the aims of trips:						
Business	531	537	493	442	450	-
Tourism	1025	766	380	621	329	-
Private	6716	9410	12056	11711	14162	-

Source: Federal Agency for Tourism, Ministry for Sport, Tourism and Youth of the Russian Federation (2009).

through that period whereas the share of business trips remained at practically the same level. This data enables us to agree, to a certain extent, with the ‘subjectivity formation’ and ‘cultural hypermobility’ theses (D’Andrea, 2006, p. 97). It can be supposed that in Russia the motivation for distant travelling, though still influenced by economic and political factors, becomes more and more defined by cultural reasons. According to D’Andrea’s conceptualization, Russian tourists can be considered as the subjects trying actively to master new forms of transnational practice, identity and subjectivity after a long stay in actual closedness during the days of the Soviet era and the following economic crisis of the 1990s. Except for the

transnational mobility, hardly any phenomenon in the cultural aspect has contributed to the weakening of the dominant codes of behaviour which have remained an inheritance from previous historical periods. Many forms of social and cultural life seen outside, especially in the advanced Western countries, have appeared extremely attractive and acted as ideals of what many would seek in their daily lives. It is felt that the experience, acquired in the practice of international mobility, has appeared as the important reason encouraging social changes in Russia towards a more open and democratic society.

As it is possible to see from the data presented, a major change in destination occurred in the number of business trips. The amount of trips to the CIS reduced markedly in comparison to 2003, whilst the amount of trips to other foreign countries has increased. It can definitely serve as evidence of the widening participation of Russian businessmen in the globalization of business processes. Growth of the international mobility of Russian businessmen was accompanied by the processes of privatization, deregulation and foreign investment in the transport and ICT sectors. As can be observed, these processes in turn promoted an intensification of the international contacts and relations at the level of private enterprises and individuals. It is predominantly horizontal international mobility that within the process of growth finds its own motives, logic and rhythms.

It is obvious that the quantitative changes of such a level of influence invariably and partially form the culture of the new mobility in Russia. D'Andrea's concept of 'neo-nomadism' (D'Andrea, 2006, p. 98) can be helpful in understanding the general characteristics of this culture, but with an essential reservation: not only cultural motivations specify this type of agency, but a mix of different motivations in which the cultural ones play a central role. Eventually, the phenomenon of neo-nomadism can be solved with Abu-Lughod's notion of 'maximization of unit autonomy' (D'Andrea, 2006, p. 109). Individual autonomy, as can be seen in social preferences in favour of automobility and long-distance travel, is a very attractive value. Almost nothing so tangibly embodies this value as an opportunity to make a variety of travel in an individual's own manner and choice. Urry also metaphorically speaks of the triumph of the culture of nomads and vagrants who turn into numerous groups of tireless individuals wandering from one place to the next in search of various kinds of pleasure (Urry, 2000). While the 'nomads' are still characterized by critical consciousness, resisting the dominating cultural standards and the constant change in setting, the mobility of the 'vagrants' is deprived of any order and destination and is determined exceptionally by the situation itself. In a way, mobility is really second nature to neo-nomadic culture as long as intense travelling simultaneously actualizes and justifies lifestyles which are quite untypical in such scales for the very recent past (D'Andrea, 2006).

As such, the range of the various types of contemporary mobilities is closely connected to the enlargement of specific substrates of mobility, the form of which is performed by technical facilities, money and energy resources. These forms cannot be accumulated in any considerable quantity without application. Their entry into social disposal invariably demands their consumption. Technical facilities should be used according to their purpose. Money should serve in the exchange operation. Energy should be spent. So, a peculiar system of autopoiesis is created (Luhmann, 1984). To all appearances, this system has only one aim – extended reproduction. Therefore, this system evolves to its sphere more and more as participants grow and it begins to depend more and more on their activity. Thus,

one has good reason to claim, in Russia we have to deal with a self-referent system of mobility which was, until the beginning of the world financial crisis in mid-2008, in a stage of steady expansion. As the data suggests, this system in its main features tends to internalize and repeat the Western pattern.

Mobile Communications in Russia

One can hardly imagine modern citizens in the majority of developing countries without mobile devices for communication (mobile phones). However, 15 years ago, a cellular phone in Russia was an object of prestigious consumption available only to the wealthy. Nowadays, mobile devices for communication have become everyday objects. The social availability of mobile technologies of communication has increased considerably. It is obvious that this phenomenon has appeared due to their reduction in price as a result of mass production of mobile devices and the enlargement of the market. To all appearances its basis is also provided by the general, deep-rooted temptations of the effective combination of their own absence/presence with the help of the fast organization of communication, which is now gracefully offered by mobile devices (Geser, 2004). Mobile phones and the corresponding infrastructure of connection comprise the sphere of what Larsen *et al.* (2006c, p. 60) call ‘communicative travel’ and form specific culture of their use.

Modern devices of communication enable the individual to be always ‘connected’, to be available at any time, receiving messages. The situation of constant availability influences the structure of succession of everyday tasks, the deadlines of fulfillment of tasks at work and at home. As a result, a system of interaction, called by Wittel (2001, p. 51) a ‘network sociality’, is created. It emerges on the basis of communicational and transport technologies and effectively combines work and play. ‘We find community in networks, not groups,’ claims Wellman (2001, p. 227). He considers that in network societies the boundaries turn out to be rather pervious, interactions are extremely diverse, communicative connections quickly switch from one network to another one, the hierarchy erodes. The network communicative sphere sets its rules and norms of coordination, which are, as usual, rather flexible and sensitive to numerous exterior changes. Similar processes of the formation of networks and the use of the advantages of communicative technologies can be observed in Russia. Research conducted by the CFS has shown the 24 hour availability of mobile technologies leads to the appearance of new social norms of usage of means of communication. Thus, in an attempt to discriminate between personal communication and work time, one differentiates the means of communication as more or less ‘tactful’ for usage in one or another moment. A respondent describes the situation in such a way:

As usual we exchange messages in V Kontakte⁷ or via ISQ. But it is so that it is more tactful. I won’t phone my friend because I don’t know what she is doing at work now and I don’t want to bother her without any necessity. I’ll write her, and when she has time she’ll answer me via ISQ. Correspondingly, she will do the same. It turns out to be more convenient, and we don’t disturb (irritate) each other. (Xenia, 25 years old)

The constant possibility of communication not only enables the structure of boundaries of work and leisure time, but also wipes out the boundaries between them.

The attempt to restrict one's work time from the other parts of life turns out to be connected with the restriction of the possibilities of communication. It turns out that a person can be present at the work place without being there physically. The situation leads to the erosion of the boundaries between work and leisure time. Occasionally, to avoid such unpleasant situations people often have to resort to the practices of restrictions of the penetration of the work time into the flow of leisure time (Chlevnuk, 2009).

On the whole, as the research has shown, mobile phones can definitely be considered the communicative means supporting and developing social communications, keeping and increasing the network capital consisting of dynamic combination of strong and weak ties (Rettie, 2008). They can be considered as some kind of catalysts of communication and means of coordination of actions. This fantastic advantage often turns out to be much more important than the money being spent on a phone or on communication services. In the long run, mobile devices help to organize spatial networks of contacts (communication), which are not attached to any definite territory, and one is therefore provided with practically immediate access to its participants. Finally, mobile phones already appear such a customary attribute of daily life that its absence seriously disturbs individuals and at times leads to genuine panic. Loss of a mobile phone or its absence, for whatever reason, in many cases leads to complete failures in everyday rhythms. In this context Larsen *et al.* (2006b, p. 17) underline virtually universal circumstances, peculiar also for the Russian users of mobile phones, that 'when people misplace their mobiles they are "lost" in the sense of being disabled, physically and socially: physically, because they have lost the now "natural" ability to talk with absent others; and socially, because they are disconnected from their social networks'.

Over the last five years, one could observe an immense growth in mobile phone subscribers in Russia. The total number of subscribers has increased by more than 11 times since 2003 and has exceeded the resident population of the country by 53.6 million (at 1 January 2009). Although, there is some correction data that considerably reduces the figures of the FSSS. Nevertheless, the general dynamics during this period remain sharply positive. So, according to the data of the company MForum Analytics, the amount of active mobile phone subscribers in Russia in the third quarter of 2009 was 97.6 million people and the amount of active SIM cards totaled 114.2 million (MForum, 2009).

The quantitative growth of mobile technologies has led to remarkable qualitative changes in the planning of everyday life, at least, in such a big megapolis as Moscow. As the research of CFS has evidenced, mobile phones attune to a great extent the individual time rhythms of the town-dwellers regarding the planning of meetings. Such phenomena which Larsen *et al.* (2006b, p. 11) called 'fluid meeting cultures' and which are characterized first of all by instability, 'fluidity' of time, place, the goal of a meeting and the number of invitees has become widespread. It is the means of mobile technologies because of the spontaneous changes of time and place of meetings that became possible. If an earlier arrangement about the time and place of a meeting was an invariant, the present situation erodes the boundaries of the possible arrangements. People arrange the approximate place and approximate time of a meeting. The possibility of communication 'face-to-face' more and more depends not on setting the situation 'now and here' as planned beforehand, but on the possibility to set it at any time owing to technical means of communication (Chlevnuk, 2009).

The internet shows a similarly impressive pace of development in Russia. The internet and the corresponding infrastructure of the network represent the sphere of virtual travel (Sheller & Urry, 2006). This trend of development also fits the thesis of individualization of the culture of the new mobility. As Wellman explains, 'The Internet has changed the nature of the continuing tension between centralization and personalization. The Internet's original prime use, email, has been a personal medium, with individuals usually managing their own address books and sending messages one-to-one. By contrast, the web affords both personalization and centralization' (Wellman, 2001, p. 231). According to the data of the research company RUMetrica, the total Russian internet audience has risen more than five times since 2004. In 2004, the growth was 23%. The company's data indicates a considerable rise in 2005 and 2006, when the audience rose by 80% and 55% respectively. Then, in 2007 and 2008, the pace of audience growth decreased according to tentative figures of 33% and 37%, respectively (RUMetrica, 2009a). In the middle of the third quarter of 2009, the national domain of Russia surpassed 2.3 million registered names. At the same time, a drastic widening of the regional internet audience occurred. The development of the capital and regional infrastructure at the end of the year 2008 became almost the same, numbering 50.6% and 49.4% respectively. Undoubtedly, the rapid development of the internet is determined by the growing social availability of this technology. Concomitantly, according to the data of the company Yandex, there were 7.4 million blogs at the beginning of spring 2009, almost twice the amount in the year 2008. Altogether, every day bloggers write almost one million messages in Russian, approximately 300,000 posts and 700 comments.

The mobile internet market has also shown an immensely high pace of growth. The growing functionality of this mobile technology leads to the multiplication of the possibilities of re-planning the time structure of the day and coordination. In such a way the mobile internet enables one to know about the events taking place, the schedule in the cinema and so forth, which helps to change plans with lightning speed. A young Muscovite, taking part in the research of CFS describes the situation in such a way.

One travels by underground. One gets an idea: let's go to the cinema. One looks immediately at the schedule on the internet. Let's go [to the cinema] on [the] Oktyabrskaya [metro station]. It's convenient. (Andrey, 23 years old)

According to the data of the consulting agency J'Son & Partners Consulting, the amount of users of mobile internet has doubled (increasing by 97%) and has reached 35.2 million. In 2006, the number of users stood at 10.8 million. In 2008, the incomes of the market of mobile internet grew by 87% in comparison to the previous time period (RUMetrica, 2009b).

A rather powerful sphere in the system of mobile devices has become one of 'navigation'. In big towns and cities, lots of travelling about the urban space is connected with the trailing of a route, way or road. The problem of navigation has become especially relevant when the urban trips exceed the bounds of the everyday practices of travelling home-work-supermarket-home. The research carried out by CFS has evidenced that in such a big megapolis as Moscow there have become less cases of disorientation in the route, as many townspeople have more and more frequently used GPS-navigation devices, which enable one to identify one's location

on the digital map and to trail routes (Komarova, 2009). For example, among drivers, strong expectations have appeared that the navigators will in the long run take them correctly to the place of destination. For instance, some drivers describe their practices of navigation in the megapolis in such a way:

I generally use the navigator at night, on account of that there are a great number of unlit places on the road. One can see no turnings, nothing. One drives, looks, one defines beforehand where the route is trailed by the navigator. In general, the navigator warns with its own voice. (Sergey, 51 years old)

I just listen to the navigator. Yes, of course when I don't know where to go at all, I completely rely on the navigator. In general, it will bring one anyway to the right way. (Vera, 42 years old)

It happens that I don't know where I can stop... some one-way roads, for example... I can stop, turn on the navigator, have a look where I am, go straight, check if I go in the right direction. If not, I can turn round. It means it happens; it happens that I don't know. But I quietly stop, turn on the emergency light. I don't think whether I disturb anyone or not, and I do what I have to do... (Kristina, 22 years old)

At the same time the drivers do not mind for instance about the imperfection of technologies (out-of-date updates of maps; the voices of the navigators getting on one's nerves), the rapid changes in the city (everyday changes of road signs, buildings and roadworks), as well as simple prejudices, which are connected with the lack of awareness and trust towards techniques (Komarova, 2009).

According to the estimations of experts, Russian citizens now use approximately 1.3–2 million GPS navigators and 15–20,000 of the analogues 'GLONASS' (Global Navigating Satellite System, Russia).⁸ Portable car navigators constitute an 80% share of the total amount of mobile navigation devices.⁹ According to the data supplied by the analytical group SmartMarketing, the car navigators market grew by more than 30% in the first six months of the year 2009 in comparison with the corresponding period in 2008 (SmartMarketing, 2009). For example, such figures are indicative of the intensity of car navigator use – in September 2009 on average 80,000 people a day used the free service 'Navitel Traffic Jams' in Moscow, whilst in Russia as a whole the amount of active users was on average 130,000 people a day.

Thus, the listed quantitative data in the mobile communications sphere serves as clear evidence of the intensive formation of the culture of new mobility. The matter not only concerns the segmental events showing casual features and subjected to the amplitude of strong oscillation it is the question of expansion, capturing the new territory, which is quickly developed and cultivated. This territory 'involves' more and more participants, imposes new rules of play but at the same time it opens new possibilities which bring the updates of the old notions of space, interactions and means of travel. So, for example, ICT contributes significantly to the labour market development in Russia. ICT makes this market more flexible and open, and the behaviour of participants active in the market more deliberate and effective in the achievement of their purposes. Job searching through the internet gives obvious advantages over traditional methods of job searching: high selectivity

of audience, efficiency of placing of the information and absence of restrictions on its volume, the possibility of fast feedback. For example, according to the company InterWork.ru, several years ago mainly computer specialists looked through the internet for a job, today they make up only 6% of the total number of people using the internet for these purposes. First place was taken by students (12%), secondly, administrative staff (9%), and third – with 8% – financiers.¹⁰ AVANTA Personnel conducted a study on the subject of exactly how Russians prefer to look for jobs online. The survey involved 1000 respondents in the seven largest cities in Russia: Krasnodar, Moscow, Novosibirsk, Rostov-on-Don, Samara, St. Petersburg and Yekaterinburg. It was found that those virtual portals which specialized in employment enjoyed the most popularity (75%). Social networks for job searching counted for 17% of respondents and vacancies in electronic mass media accounted for 8% of respondents (Avantapersonnel, 2009).

Furthermore, the hybrid system of mobility has led to a noticeable growth in the popularity of e-payment amongst mobile device users. This electronic form of money turns out to be an extremely flexible and mobile one. It spatially separates the buyer and the seller of goods or services, and enables one to choose the time of payment with an obviously higher level of freedom (Larsen *et al.*, 2006b, p. 60). According to the data collected by Yandex, in 2008 e-payment of goods took an approximate share of 3% of all money transactions and showed a tendency to growth. The consequences of these innovations have already begun to influence the spatial organization of trading goods and services. As Yandex shows, the total sum of e-purses (money accounts) being registered in the system ‘Yandex-Money’ in September 2009 reached 4.3 million. By comparison, in 2006, the amount totalled less than 0.8 million; in 2007, approximately 1.7 million; in September 2008, 2.6 million; and only by September 2009 did every workday register, on average, 5,600 new e-purses (money accounts).

Conclusion

The analysis that was carried out by the Center of Fundamental Sociology, Moscow (CFS), enables one to single out several trends in the formation of the culture of new mobility in Russia, many features of which reproduce the Western patterns to a greater or lesser extent of success. The culture of new mobility in Russia is distinguished by the same processes of ‘individualization’ (Beck *et al.*, 1994; Bauman, 2000) and ‘networked individualism’ (Wellman, 2001). Except these processes, unlike in Western countries, take place on other grounds which still remain cultural codes of the Soviet epoch preserved in the days of the economic crisis of the 1990s. The mobilities paradigm (Sheller & Urry, 2006), as our research has shown, provides a suitable conceptual tool to describe and better understand the new cultural trends. Under the influence of information and communication technologies emerge new forms and methods of coordinated interactions in networks, which in turn become more personalized. In Russia it is possible to ascertain the general trend of the wider dissemination of the situational forms of social solidarity, largely due to the influence of the new culture of mobility (Filippov, 2009). They can be fairly characterized as brevity flow in time and heterogeneous in nature. The reason for the formation of such transient forms of solidarity may be a variety of motives that may serve as a basis for building a common identity in different situations. It

can hardly be argued that such forms entirely replace the traditional ones, but they make a significant diversity in daily social life.

First of all, a growth of automobility and individualization of travel in Russia is stated. The supply of the population with their own cars in the period 2003–2008 grew to the striking figure of 40%. At the same time, weak dynamics in the use of public transport were observed. The general rise was only due to the noticeable growth in air travel, while public bus communication began to fall into decay. Secondly, during that period of time, a strong flow of private transnational trips was formed in Russia mostly aimed at the long-distance. A large number of Russians became more accustomed to the role of ‘international tourist’. Thirdly, an immense growth in mobile phone subscribers was observed in Russia. According to FSSS data, the total number of subscribers has increased more than 11 times since 2003 and is seizing the nation as a whole. The internet audience has also shown an impressive pace of development. The total Russian internet audience has risen more than five times since 2004. Every day more than a million messages are written on the virtual network. The mobile internet market has also shown an immense pace of growth. Since 2006, it has grown by more than three times. ‘Navigation’ has become a rather mighty stream in the system of mobile devices. According to expert’s estimations, Russian citizens now use approximately 1.2–1.3 million GPS navigators. In addition, the hybrid system of new mobility has led to a noticeable growth in the popularity of e-payment among mobile device users. Only in the ‘Yandex-Money’ system has the amount of e-pursuits grown since 2006 and by more than five times.

Thus, one has good reason to claim that the culture of new mobility is being actively formed in Russia with a growing material basis. The Russian population uses almost the entire spectrum of the contemporary means and forms of mobility; it has demonstrated its willingness to respond and to transform innovations into common practice. The latter trajectory of the development of this hybrid system, as one can judge, will to a great extent depend on the state of external resources: monetary systems and necessity of feeding it with the required energy resources.

Notes

1. The conveyances of public transport are related to the conveyances on a commercial basis (cost of travel) for passengers (including citizens having the right to free travel on public transport). Conveyances carried out by commercial organizations are recognized as conveyances of public transport when it follows the law, other legal acts or a permit (license) given to these organizations. Organizations must carry out conveyances of loads, passengers or luggage at the request of any citizen or legal entity. The unit of measurement is passenger per kilometre. It is determined by calculating the products of the number of passengers in every conveyance and the distance of the conveyance in kilometres. (Methodological explanations of the FSSS. Available at http://www.gks.ru/bgd/regl/b09_06/IssWWW.exe/Stg/1/19-00.htm).
2. Though taxibuses in Russia are treated as public transport, actually in the Russian cities they represent a taxi version. They make trips on certain routes, but allow passengers to choose places to stop on these routes and practically do not observe schedules. It is difficult enough to estimate a passenger turnover of taxibuses as the FSSS does not consider statistics separately.
3. Other interesting comparative statistical data about safety conditions on the roads in Russia and the Western countries can be gathered from the report of the working group of presidium of the State Council of the Russian Federation: ‘About the further measures on increase of safety of traffic, death-rate decrease at road and accidents’, Moscow, 2009. Available at <http://ugadn45.ru/downloads/17.doc>

4. For example, a typical feature of behaviour of Russian drivers on the roads is the warning with two short signals of headlights of drivers from a counter flow about an upcoming checkpoint manned by the state automobile inspection conducting inspections of road users.
5. So, from 2003–2008: monetary base, in a wide definition, (M2) has grown in Russia by 4.5 times. Cash in circulation increased by five times. Crediting of natural persons has increased by 22 times. The rate of refinancing, reflecting a total cost of money in economy, has decreased from 21% in 2003 to 13% by the end of 2008 (Central bank of Russia, <http://www.cbr.ru>). Real incomes of the population have grown by 48%. From 2001–2008 oil production increased by 40%, having reached, in 2007, an all-time high of 491.3 million tons (the FSSS, <http://www.gks.ru>).
6. The data is given without taking into account the amount of departures made by permanent residents, military personnel and maintenance staff, including drivers of vehicles, crews of sea crafts, river and air boats and railway crews.
7. A social network in Russia, www.vkontakte.ru
8. By 30 March 2010, the number of functioning satellites in an orbit around the Earth has been increased to 21 plus two reserve satellites. Available at <http://www.glonass-ianc.rsa.ru>
9. The remainder of the 20% of the market of mobile navigating devices comprises tourist GPS navigators, navigating systems for travel on water, aviation navigators GPS and sports GPS navigators. Available at <http://www.interwork.ru/analit/pubs/090484.htm>

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