URBAN POLICIES
FOR A CONTEMPORARY PERIPHERY
Insights from eastern Russia
VASILEIOS KITSOS
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Abstract

In recent decades, the notion of quality of life has been closely associated with the built urban environment and urbanistic practice. Policies addressing public space and aiming at cities’ increased international competitiveness are proliferating. The relevant body of scholarly literature is rich and has been linked to the earlier discussion on the global city and the internationalization of secondary cities under economic globalization. Many newer studies adopt a policy mobility perspective in order to capture this dynamic movement of ideas and policies. This thesis commences from this line of research. It brings into the discussion cities in the post-socialist realm, cities which otherwise remain outliers rather than contenders for international policy mobility. It is assumed that they can effortlessly inform the answer to the following question: How do peripheral and globalizing cities engage with the ideas that guide current urbanistic practice? The thesis addresses this question by drawing on unique empirical material from three case studies situated in the Russian Far East and Siberia.

The thesis uses a multi-method research design. The analysis follows (a) the moments of normative change in addressing urban development, (b) a dynamic actor landscape, (c) resources allocated to the implementation of policies for urban improvement, and (d) physical, material output in the three examples provided, which are situated in the cities of Vladivostok, Krasnoyarsk, and Achinsk. These are associated with three processes of urban renewal that pertain to the quest for internationalization, revitalization, and participatory design – in short, for urban attractiveness and a higher quality of life. Analyzing and further conceptualizing these as processes of convergence, regulation, and compensation, the thesis highlights how the adaptation to international urbanistic practice has been linked to a recent problematizing of the notion of urbanity in the respective national and local policy landscape. Rather than relying on the analytical categorization of a post-Soviet city, the findings show that urban policy change can be explained in terms of the pursuit of contemporaneity. In addition to suggesting this refinement of theoretical concepts, the thesis highlights the conditioning of the mobilization and localization of policies by spatiotemporal specificities and precedents in eastern Russia. This is a contribution to the field of international urban studies, the literature on policy transfer, and Russian and Eurasian studies.

Keywords: urbanism, global city, globalizing city, globalization, post-socialism, policy mobility, mega-events, boosterism, urban regeneration, corporate social responsibility, participatory planning, Russia, Siberia, Asia-Pacific region, contemporaneity
Abstract in Swedish


Studiens forskningsdesign bygger på flera metoder. Analysen följer (a) normativa förändringar i stadsutvecklingen, (b) ett dynamiskt aktörslandskap, (c) resurser som tilldelas stadsförbättring och (d) fysisk, materiell output i de tre fallstudierna, som är belägna i städerna Vladivostok, Krasnojarsk och Achninsk. Dessa städer är förknippade med stadsförnyelseprocesser som rör strävan efter internationalisering, revitalisering och deltagande design, det vill säga, strävan efter ökat attraktivitet i städerna och högre livskvalitet. Genom att analysera och vidare konceptualisera dessa processer som konvergens, reglerings- och kompensationsprocesser belyser avhandlingen hur anpassningen till internationell urban praxis har varit kopplad till en problematisering av begreppet urbanitet i både nationella och lokala nivå. I stället för att förlita sig på den analytiska kategoriseringen post-sovjetisk stad visar resultaten att förändringar i stadspolitiken kan förklaras i termer av strävan efter contemporaneity. Förutom att föreslå denna teoretiska förfining belyser avhandlingen hur mobiliseringen och lokaliseringen av politiken betingas av de spatiotemporala särdrag i östra Ryssland.
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This dissertation has been a personal endeavor, but at the same time it is the crystallization, in the form of a printed book, of myriad events, thoughts, actions and interactions. It also would not have been possible without the contributions of many people.

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During my PhD studies I attended doctoral courses not only at Södertörn, but also at other universities across Sweden: KTH, Lund, Malmö, Stockholm and Uppsala. I also joined conferences and doctoral seminars in Helsinki, Zurich, Paros, Florence, Oslo, Chicago, Darmstadt and Moscow. I presented drafts of my work in front of many young and senior scholars, whose work I also got to know. This resulted in a large amount of accumulated knowledge which I sense I still have not digested. I am grateful to Södertörn for giving me space to pursue these activities and to design my own research.

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Abbreviations

АГК (Ачинский глинозёмный комбинат) [Achinsk Alumina Refinery]
АИЖК (Агентство ипотечного жилищного кредитования) [AHML: Agency for Housing Mortgage Lending]
АНПЗ ВНК (Ачинский нефтеперерабатывающий завод Восточной нефтяной компании) [Achinsk Oil Refinery of Eastern Oil Company]
АТЭС (Азиатско-Тихоокеанское экономическое сотрудничество) [APEC: Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation]
ВЭФ (Восточный экономический форум) [EEF: Eastern Economic Forum]
Генплан (Генеральный план) [General Plan]
Гипрогор (Государственный институт проектирования городов) [State Institute of Urban Design]
Горстройпроект (проектный институт городского строительства) [Design Institute for Urban Construction]
Госплан СССР (Государственный плановый комитет Совета Министров СССР) [State Planning Committee of the Council of Ministers of the USSR]
Госстрой (Государственный строительный комитет СССР) [State Committee for Construction]
ГОЭЛО (Государственная комиссия по электрификации России) [State Commission for the Electrification of Russia]
ГУЛаг (Главное управление лагерей) [Gulag: Main Administration of Camps]
ГЭС (гидроэлектростанция) [HPP: Hydroelectric Power Plant]
Далзавод (Дальневосточный завод Звезда) [Dalzavod: Far Eastern shipbuilding complex “Zveza”]
КАТЭК (Канско-Ачинский топливно-энергетический комплекс) [Kansk-Achinsk fuel and energy complex]
КрАЗ (Красноярский алюминиевый завод) [Krasnoyarsk aluminum plant]
КБ Стрелка (консультационное бюро Стрелка) [CB Strelka, Strelka Consulting Bureau]
НИИПГрадостроительства (Научно-исследовательский и проектный институт по разработке генеральных планов и проектов застройки городов) [NIIP, Research and Design Institute for the Development of Master Plans and Urban Development Projects]
Промстройпроект (Институт по проектированию промышленного строительства) [Institute for the Design of Industrial Construction]
RAASN (Russian Academy of Architecture and Building Sciences)
Роснефть (Rosneft; Russian Oil)
РосНИПИ Урбанистики (RosNIPI, Russian research and design institute of urban studies)
РУСАЛ/ОК РУСАЛ (Rusal United Company)
РУСАЛ (RUSAL, Russian Aluminum, until 2007)
Сибревком (Sibrevcom, Siberian Revolutionary Committee)
СниП (Building Norms and Rules)
Совнархоз (Council of the National Economy)
Соцгород (socialist city)
Судоремонт (shipyard)
СФУ (Siberian Federal University)
СУЭК-СГК (Siberian Coal Energy Company – Siberian Generating Company)
ТПК (Territorial Production Complex)
ЦСИ «Заря» (Zarya Center for Contemporary Art (CCA))
ЦСК (Sport Clubs Center)
APR (Asia-Pacific Region)
CUE (Federal Program “Formation of a comfortable urban environment”)
FDI (foreign direct investment)
FEZ (free economic zone)
NEP (New Economic Policy)
SAR (special administrative region)
SME (small and medium enterprises)
1. Global ideas in peripheral cities

1.1. Introduction

One of my first memories from Krasnoyarsk is my first walk along the embankment in December 2014. The view of the Yenisei, one of the largest rivers in the world, was impressive. What also struck me during this first walk was the absence of people: I didn’t see a single person. There was no surprise in that, as the temperature was below -20. I was yet to discover that people socialized in indoor malls, cafes, and bars – or at home. And starting in late April, I witnessed the city’s public spaces, including the embankment, bustling with life. In short, in the course of that year, I came to terms with what I viewed as a certain Siberian way of urban dwelling. It was quiet, simple, socially conservative, with a strong traditional work ethic. Despite the fact that Krasnoyarsk is a big city, life there was circular, following the seasons and religious or popular rituals. This simplicity cut across the city’s public spaces: a bit rough, outdated, or kitschy, but generally decent and spacious.

One and a half years later, I was in Moscow for the first time. In that visit, I sensed the rhythm of the country’s capital. Not much different from other large urban agglomerations, Moscow was a proper megalopolis: dynamic, imposing, cosmopolitan, forward-looking. However, during that visit, I regularly came upon repair works on pavements and squares all over the city; the entire city center was in a fervor and resembled a construction site whose scale, in my experience, was comparable only to the preparations for the Olympic Games in my hometown of Athens back in 2004. That was clearly something big.

I wondered what this was all about as I started more carefully observing the signs and banners placed along construction sites. This was apparently a large municipal program, in fact the largest of its kind in the last three decades, which aspired to bring the city to the global forefront of chic, sustainable, pedestrian-friendly urban design. Evidently, public spaces in Russia’s capital were being retrofitted to match this cosmopolitan identity.

It was on my second visit to Moscow, at the Urban Forum in summer 2017, that I realized that what I had witnessed earlier was actually now taking place across the entire country. It was now organized at the federal level and
being exhibited at the Forum; looking at the exhibits, I saw images of familiar places in Siberia. The embankment of Krasnoyarsk, along which I had taken a first quiet stroll in December 2014, was included in the program as well. Like Moscow’s center, it was to become chic, sustainable, pedestrian-friendly. The images promised a different embankment: Not snowy but sunny. Not frequented by the average Krasnoyarsk dweller but by casually dressed, smart urbanites. Not simple but equipped with outdoor furniture and redesigned according to the newest landscaping trends. Krasnoyarsk, it seemed, should also become dynamic, wealthy, cosmopolitan, forward-looking.

I couldn’t help but wonder: Why should a square in a city in the middle of Eurasia have to look like Moscow, which in turn had to look like Paris or New York? From where would all these cosmopolites appear and start walking along the river, let alone cycling? And who was to design and execute these chic landscaping works? The latest instances of good urban landscaping in cities like Krasnoyarsk dated from the late Soviet period; except for kitschy neo-baroque designs, almost none of it had taken place since then. Furthermore, the distance between the grim reality of many of the cities I was familiar with and the visionary designs that these exhibits portrayed was vast: One was about limited local budgets and executive capacities while the other was about hip Nordic bureaus.

To me, this distance was too large to grasp, and the whole idea was questionable to start with. But apparently it was happening. Several sessions in the forum I was attending were indeed about that: Actors based in cities across Russia were coordinating their efforts, presenting their findings, boasting about their successes or sharing their concerns. All of them were attempting to grasp the distance. To turn hundreds of city squares in an area stretching from the Baltic Sea to the Pacific Ocean into landscaping hotspots resembling Aarhus, Barcelona, or Seoul. Even accounting for the exaggeration which is common in such presentations, I had never seen anything on this scale and of this boldness. Perhaps in China? This is what automatically comes to mind when one thinks of the total mobilization of resources by command. But then again, this was something different. It was not about quantity, but about quality. Not about building, but about improving. Not about square meters, but about urban policies: It was indeed about closing a gap via policy transfer. Was this a gap between Moscow and the periphery or a gap between some idealized construction of the West and Russia in general? Or perhaps a gap between state policies of the 2010s and the quiet civil discontent about their materialization? Whatever this was, it was an ambitious, competitive en-
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deavor complying with the aesthetics of the most up-to-date international urban consultancies.

It became clear that what I sought were the actions and processes directed towards the assessment of this gap. Not necessarily within this particular event or related to this particular program, but definitely in this spatio-temporal context.

1.2. Research problem

This thesis seeks to describe what happens on the ground when international ideas are transplanted into peripheral localities. This relates to a topic common in urban studies and globalization research: The internationalization of the quest for attractiveness in policy circles.

With technological advances and increased mobility, cities across the world have been addressing internationalization and/or globalization for several decades. At first limited to a small number of economically and politically dominant urban centers, the effect of internationalization has now spread across the planet, in major and secondary cities alike.

In this discussion on globalization, cities have been conceived of and framed as animate entities that take part in a race. In this race, they are supposedly competing to attract increasingly mobile talent, transnational investments, cross-border innovation and the like — in short, they are competing for urban attractiveness. This has become a task for a broad range of policymakers, politicians, professionals, businesses, and theorists. A look at the sheer number of quality-of-life indexes published by, among others, the international lifestyle press, asset management firms, and consulting agencies, testifies to this.1 Remarkably, it has occurred within a few decades if not mere years. One of the instruments urban regimes2 have at their disposal to increase cities’ attractiveness is urban renewal and the upgrading of selected districts. Again, this instrument has become a widespread policy in a very short time. More than anywhere else, perhaps, it is visible in the urban system

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2 In urban regime theory, power is viewed as fragmented and regimes as the collaborative arrangements through which local governments and private actors assemble the capacity to govern (cf. Mossberger & Stoker 2001). In this thesis, the term “urban regime” is used differently, implying not coordination over previously fragmented power but rather the coordinative arrangements among local administrative and governmental bodies, civic institutions, and private businesses.
of Europe, with policies for renewal omnipresent in municipal and regional agendas as well as dense networks of knowledge exchanges and the sharing of best practices.

The research on the international spread of policies that have emerged as a response to the broad problematization of the urban condition\(^3\) is very rich and has attracted the attention of researchers in diverse fields in the last decades. More recently, researchers have integrated a policy transfer perspective into this discussion – understandably so, since together with the internationalization of cities and of the notion of attractiveness, the circulation of policies themselves has also become international: The process of policy internationalization has become subject to research in and for itself.

A similar increase in research interest can be observed in the “post-socialist” part of Europe. With urban regimes in this geographical area having been highly active in building policy frameworks to navigate through the transition period, this part of Europe has offered an abundant range of examples of policy transfer under the institutional, political, economic, and sociocultural specificities that the post-socialist era inherited. A significant post-socialist strand in urban studies has described these specificities in detail and, more recently, the processes of policy transfer themselves. Despite the expansive growth of this research strand, the subject of Russia, a highly urbanized country with many large cities which one would expect to be studied more than any other with regard to policy processes streamlining urban transformation, has been largely absent. The existing research on such processes in Russia has remained geographically confined to the main European Russian cities and has not addressed the unfolding of contemporary urbanism across the country’s territory.

This thesis takes on a classic “trouble,” the global/local nexus, a constituent in the field of urban sociology, and focuses on policies arriving in a specific group of cities that have not yet attracted significant scholarly interest: Secondary, non-capital cities located in parts of the world that have recently, indirectly, or under specific terms become part of internationalization processes. In other words, it addresses policies applied in secondary cities in peripheral contexts. In order to underscore this global/local dichotomy, the “local” and empirical focus is Siberia and, more broadly, eastern Russia: A setting as peripheral and as cut off from internationalization

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\(^3\) “Problematizing (of) the urban” will broadly refer to the development of discourses on urban life, the circulation of urbanistic theory and practice, and their institutionalization. In this association with “problematizing,” “urban” functions as a noun, as in urbanity (a more accurate wording would be the German das Städtische).
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circuits as possible, at least geographically. This is not only because the ways in which policies for urban renewal reach regional centers in Russia are largely unexplored but also because the eastern part of Russia in particular has escaped foreign researchers’ radar almost entirely. I begin by presuming this to be due to a strong constructed “otherness” and the persistent negative connotations of the word “Siberia”: Rather than dense human settlement and urbanization, indeed, the region has been associated with the absence of these, despite the factually rather inaccurate character of this association. It follows that Siberia can be described as a periphery of the semi-periphery, if one adopts a classic view of the world in core, peripheral, and semi-peripheral world regions (Wallerstein, 1974). In terms of geographic and sociohistorical characteristics, it can also be considered an extreme periphery.

1.3. Aim and research questions

The aim of this dissertation is to investigate how ideas are conditioned into policies and how they manifest themselves in processes of urban renewal in peripheral contexts. I address these questions by means of three case studies of materialized projects representing three different ongoing processes which exemplify a landscape of changing urban policies. The first is a case of mega-event boosterism in Vladivostok, a port city in the Russian Far East. The second is a case of urban revitalization in the large eastern Siberian city of Krasnoyarsk. The third is the case of a corporate social responsibility program running in several locations across Siberia and the Urals, among which the small Siberian city of Achinsk was chosen for the purposes of this study. The analysis of each case will be guided by the following four research questions: (a) What are the moments of normative change? (b) How is the configuration of actors changing? (c) What resources are being invested? (d) What has the physical output of changing urban policies been during the period of this study?

Answering these questions will address the gap between ideas, their formulation into policy, and their materialization as a series of sequences of translation. Because the discussion is situated in underrepresented cities beyond the global North, this thesis will contribute to the analysis of contemporary problematizing from an international perspective. Furthermore, it will draw a thread that links theoretical discourses on the global/local dichotomy, the space/place distinction, studies in policy formulation, and an anthropological reading of physical space touching upon the post-socialist strand of urban studies. As such, the thesis will contribute to a broad scien-
tific nexus by bringing a unique perspective of the urban as analytical instrument, a net in which globally circulating ideas are caught, rendered into policy and then morphed into material spatialities. The rationale for situating this study in eastern Russia is provided below.

1.4. Situating this study in the symbolic periphery

As mentioned, the practice of seeking to increase the attractiveness of cities by making use of international policy tools is part of the global/local dichotomy. In order to underscore this dichotomy, the “global” is here represented by the choice of common, broadly internationalized urban policies. The “local” has been sought among cities in excluded, overseen places, away from internationalization circuits. With an eye on post-socialist urban studies, it seems logical to seek a strong manifestation of a global/local dichotomy in cities demonstrating as many post-socialist features as possible. I will argue that an answer lies in the remote stretches of the post-Soviet realm. Ethnoculturally, this realm has been mainly associated with Russia; geographically, it is linked with large stretches of Eurasia, with Siberian urbanization providing a prime example. In addition, it is important to note that the urbanization of Siberia and the Russian Far East has been primarily a Soviet-planned, -designed and -executed endeavor. Moreover, the international links of eastern Russian cities during the Cold War were also weak: Just 30 years ago, many among them were closed even to Soviet citizens. With their tissue sealed to the forces of the multiplicities that flourished after the entrepreneurial turn in the globally networked city, how did actors in these cities navigate the shift from Soviet modernity to the present urbanist discourses? How did they seek to balance the limited supply of policy tools, knowledge, and resources? Evidently, if the term “post-socialist/post-Soviet” has any resonance for urban studies today, it should be manifested in such cities. Eastern Russia offers an excellent terrain as well, given that the global/local dichotomy today is vividly pronounced.

On the other hand, eastern Russia is loosely designated on a mental level. It is many things at the same time: One thing to the Russian administration, another to regional economists, yet another to historians or to the general public. One can use the terms Siberia, eastern Russia, Asian Russia, or Russia beyond the Urals to refer to more or less the same territory. This territory has been conceptualized in several ways: The frontier concept has been associated with the process of historical colonization and settlement, while the active membrane (Stolberg 2004: 178), a term borrowed from sociologists of fron-
tiers, placed pre-revolutionary Siberia and the Russian Far East in dynamic relation to East Asia, including an antagonistic one between the Russian Empire and Japan. Gloomier descriptions saw the Russian Far East as an open-air prison, referring to the use of the territory as a penal colony in both the tsarist and Soviet periods. Lying at the center of what H. J. Mackinder (1904) suggested as the earth’s pivot area, Siberia attained a central role differing from the early 20th century’s geopolitical theories. The concept of the East as a frontier and Siberia as the promised land remained a recurring theme in official Soviet discourse in a series of policies to populate, cultivate, industrialize, and interlink the territory. In more recent times, the geopolitical weight of Siberia was once again utilized by fringe political currents and integrated into the Eurasianist discourse. From an opposing viewpoint, a Brookings Institute report from 2003 saw Siberia as containing nothing more than centers of unfreedom – a political, social, ecological and planning error (Hill and Gaddy, 2003: 103, 139). In book reviews, a distance was kept from these intense expressions (Balzer, 2004), while Siberia-based reviewers refuted them almost entirely (Efimov et al., 2012: 124-150). Leaving politicized delineations aside, the most widespread conceptualization of eastern Russia today is that of a holder of largely untapped natural resources and of the country’s main source of foreign exchange reserves.

Such conceptualizations demonstrate that eastern Russia comes into being in relation to something else, carrying a seemingly endless in-between status, anchored to the political center of the country. Even in the domestic discourse, it is not uncommon to describe the area as a part of Russia that stands apart from Russia. Either failed or always incomplete, it constitutes an extended spatiotemporal Elsewhere, a canvas on which grandiose visions are relentlessly drawn and redrawn. Hence, an appropriate way to approach it would be by constituting an argument that relies less on its difference and originality and more on its fundamental connection to an Elsewhere (Mbembe and Nuttall, 2004: 348). When studying urban policies in the Elsewheres of eastern Russia, an opportunity thus arises to study policies for Elsewheres in general. In complement to eastern Russia as an extended elsewhere stands the strong symbolic deficit of eastern Russia: If symbolic capital is nothing other than economic or cultural capital that is known and recognized (Bourdieu, 1990), then eastern Russia is firmly conceptualized, time and again, as a symbolic periphery.

One could easily argue that eastern Russia’s obscurity developed with good reason. After all, this symbolic periphery has not been associated with urban life. If anything, it is associated with the absence thereof—and not only
on historical grounds: It remains sparsely populated, with only a few million inhabitants. So why would Siberian cities matter to contemporary urbanism in any case? One could simply dismiss them entirely and concentrate on bustling world cities instead or, when studying Russia, on existing, relevant scholarship, which has mostly covered the transformation of Moscow and, to a lesser extent, a few large western Russian cities. In itself, this fact has contributed to the gradual formulation of an uneven knowledge landscape, with developments in eastern Russia remaining in the shadows. This has, however, happened undeservingly: By accommodating global energy flows, holding mineral resources, and becoming pivotal to geopolitical reconfigurations, the territory has entered a process of globalizing and of interconnecting to the global economy. Cities located in the fringes of the former Soviet realm could be described as ordinary, borrowing a term recently used to describe cities that perform industrial, manufacturing, and “real” producer and consumer service functions, benefiting from both global interconnectedness and exposure to global imageries (Krätke, 2014: 1667). High population mobility, expressed in both sharp urban decline following deindustrialization in some areas and in booming towns near resource-rich areas or in the perimeters of large agglomerations, allows us to assume that the configuration of urban life in this territory is not uninteresting to urban studies scholarship. This was among the starting points of this study: The realization that delving into the unevenness of knowledge about cities while being aware of the disproportionality thereof must provide valuable hindsight.

Finally, I suggest that Siberia and the Far East are worth studying not only because they offer a clear view of the contrast between past and present, but because of a unique historic event during the early 21st century that amplified this contrast and opened a rare window into studying knowledge transfer beyond specific geographical delineations. That event is the breakdown of distance. Until recently guaranteed by physical distance, the relative insulation of eastern Russia to outside influence on its urban policies has dissolved under present digital interconnectedness. I would argue that, here, the contrast between the inherited material output of formerly insular Soviet urban policies and present urbanistic vocabularies is amplified by the spatial attributes and symbolically peripheral role that is unique to eastern Russia, a territory corresponding to a spatiality in the process of being made (Massey, 1999: 265) in the era of global interconnectedness.
1.5. Disposition

This thesis is organized as follows: In the next chapter, the theoretical framework of the study is presented. I discuss the concepts of the global and the globalizing city as well as urban policy transfer in the context of finance-led globalization. I include the theorizing of the post-socialist and the post-Soviet city in this discussion, arguing for their relevance today in relation to processes of globalizing. I suggest studying cities situated in the geographical extremes of the post-socialist realm in order to do so, and it is from there that I arrive at eastern Russia. Finally, I refer to urban renewal as a process associated with highly dynamic policy mobilities and translation. I then bring into discussion three processes of urban renewal – boosterism, revitalization, and participatory planning – that are topical to the urbanist discourse today and exemplary of the internationalization of ideas; they ground my orientation in the rich policy landscape of Russia as well as cases of specific localities where such processes take place. These descriptions are provided to inform the analytical part of this thesis. Chapter 3 describes the research design, methods, case selection, and data collection. Information on the selected locations is also provided, matching them with processes of urban renewal: Vladivostok in the Russian Far East is matched with a process of boosterism, and Krasnoyarsk in eastern Siberia is matched with a process of urban revitalization; meanwhile, the smaller locality of Achinsk, also in eastern Siberia, is matched with a participatory planning process.

The historical context of this study is presented in Chapter 4. This goes back to the earlier development of the Russian city and processes of integrating international planning and architectural ideas. Chapter 4 emphasizes the morphing of the sparsely inhabited territory of eastern Russia into an articulated macro-region with distinct cities from the 19th century onwards. The insights that this historic retrospect provides are reformulated into rough conceptualizations that not only articulate the past but also provide a frame within which to view the present. Thus, apart from its main role in presenting the historical background, this chapter provides the setting in which processes surrounding urban renewal are identified and brought into the main analysis.

Subsequently, I examine the extent to which these policies can be identified in the chosen spatial fringe of the former Soviet realm and undergo translation and indigenization: If this is the case, then how does translation take place, by whom, and under what conditions and institutional frames? What rationales surround those policies, and what material forms does
translation take? Answering these questions will be easier once policies have been described and a degree of localization of cases achieved. Chapters 5-7 make up the empirical and analytical part of the study. Chapter 5 starts with an analysis of the policies that sought to boost Vladivostok as Russia’s main port in the Pacific Ocean in the early 2010s and relates to the theoretical discussion on mega-event urbanism in Chapter 2. How and why was the Pacific port assigned an international role, and what did this role imply for urban space materialities? The answer lies in establishing a streamline of generous gestures for boosting the city’s profile, indicating convergence on a territorial scale. Chapter 6 proceeds with the analysis of policies deployed in public space revitalization in a large eastern Siberian city. How did a multitude of policies and targeted programs unfold in order to complete this task? The analysis of the revitalization process demonstrates the crystallization of a regulatory component in the urbanistic discourse in this city. Finally, Chapter 7 considers processes of participatory urbanism in a small regional center in Siberia. How was this international policy tool conveyed in relation to existing local realities and anticipations? Through the analysis, I demonstrate how the intended processes gave rise to an urbanism with a largely compensatory role and function on a local scale.

Chapter 8 is the final part of the thesis. I summarize the analysis by answering the research questions directly and by relating those answers to the research aim. I then conceptualize the analytical findings and proceed to discuss the ways in which the three case studies contribute to the body of research in this field. I also articulate the concept of a conditional adaptation of ideas underlying processes of translation in a quest to internationalize the symbolic periphery which, as it turns out, points to the quest for contemporaneity. The chapter closes with some final reflections and suggestions for future research.
2. Theoretical framework

This dissertation investigates the ways in which ideas and policies are conditioned and how they manifest themselves in processes that reshape space and place in peripheral contexts. The theoretical framework that allows us to understand these processes is influenced by several perspectives and concepts. These are provided in this chapter. I begin by introducing views on the urban condition in the 20th century in order to provide a context for present urban policy features, translations, and mutations. The first view is the global city discussion, a starting point that is very broad in its scope and outreach. I emphasize the relevance of the discussion for public spaces and the relational turn to spatial phenomena summarized in the space/place dichotomy. Subsequently, the concept of the globalizing city under finance-led globalization is introduced and linked to processes of transfer and translation. In the context of globalization, internationalization of knowledge and policy mobilities suggests a demarcation of the globalizing policy landscape. I then introduce the cities “formerly known as post-socialist” as constituting a good terrain for studying urban policy formation today. Before discussing policies, I review the (post-)socialist and (post-)Soviet urban studies strand, the concept of transition, and reflections on the relevance of these terms in the recent policy mobilities literature. In order to effectively inform the research questions, I push towards the last spatial frontier of post-socialism and situate this work in eastern Russia, which I identify as exemplary of a new juncture of globalization. I proceed to discuss the internationalization of knowledge and nuances of policy mobilities and translation; I suggest the demarcation of a globalizing policy landscape to complement the “global city” strand of research by bringing those concepts together, gluing them with the notion of translation. A discussion on policies for urban renewal follows, and three variants are highlighted: Mega-event boosting, urban revitalization schemes, and participatory planning practices. These tools are central in the conceptualization of the case study analysis in the next chapters.
2.1. The global city and the globalizing city

2.1.1. The urban condition

A starting point of this thesis is the study of uneven geographies—not only in terms of urban development, but in terms of the articulation of urbanistic discourses within finance-led globalization. Globalization is a broad and widely used concept. For the purposes of this study, globalization will be associated with what has been termed the “distantiated world,” which is neither here nor there but always suspended “in between,” structured around flows of people, images, information, and money moving within and across national borders (Amin and Thrift, 2002: 51). From that vantage, this thesis considers globalization as structured around information, knowledge, and ideas.

Recent literature has identified three features of globalization: (a) the dissolution of a hierarchical spatial order of political sovereignty dominated by the nation-state, (b) the multitude of actors taking part in worldwide interactions, and (c) the plurality of locations that are incorporated in worldwide entanglements. The literature has thus interpreted globalization as a dialectical process of de- and re-territorialization (Middell and Naumann, 2010: 152). Among the constituents of globalization are colonization, voluntary imitation, and modernization (Czarniawska, 2002: 7), according to whose premises ideas are presumed to travel seamlessly. This travel has been facilitated by the rapid advance of communication technologies, and it now connects individuals, societies, and groups of actors. In earlier theorizing on globalization, global economic relations were conceptualized as the “space of flows” with their equivalent in the “space of places,” which impacts the everyday life of a city in numerous ways (Castells, 1996) and permeates urban regimes at all levels. A more detailed theoretical approach to such flows and their morphing into policies for space and place follows in Section 2.3, preceded by a brief historical overview of theorizing on the urban condition.

The exchange of information and ideas is, of course, not a new phenomenon, nor is it associated with globalization trajectories; it cuts across both structural and post-structural theorizing. Relational thinking on the city has emphasized this dynamic element, describing cities as an “extraordinary agglomeration of flows” (Ash and Thrift, 2002: 42) of people, information, values, and lifestyles. The feature of complexity is synonymous with urban life, as observed in Georg Simmel’s seminal early-20th-century sociological analyses of big city life or in the works of the founders of the Chicago School, who saw the city as a psychophysical mechanism (Park, 1915: 578). Subsequent theorizing developed a view on the city in relation to functions. With
the separation of functions in urban planning having been made obligatory in 1927 in the Charter of Athens, functionalist studies of cities flourished; Christaller’s central place theory (1933), an economic theory of optimal locations aiming at the derivation of laws regulating the size, number, and spatial distribution of settlements with urban tertiary economic functions, set the tone. Wirth’s mathematical approach sought to formulate classifications based on the relationship between population numbers, density of settlement, heterogeneity of inhabitants and group life (Wirth 1938), and the economic classification and internal structure of cities (Harris and Ulman, 1945), whereas Zipf’s law (1949) was also applied in the study of cities, seeking to identify universal patterns of city size but approaching nations as closed containers of cities. These views, circulating mainly between Germany and North America for the first half of the century, were highly influential in urban economics, regional planning, and transportation design, with the responding policies likewise remaining the domain of nation-states.

The 1960s and 1970s saw the internationalization of analytical urban research with worldwide diffusion and innovation (Lichtenberger, 1997: 11). Post-structuralist approaches addressed urbanism and ways of inhabiting the city, positioning cities within networks. With a well-established presence in the field of urban geography, the French Annales School emphasized larger structures and the *longue durée* of macro-regions (Braudel, 1949), while Wallerstein’s world-system analysis (1979) distinguished among core, semi-peripheral, and peripheral world regions. Technological advances were considered in later studies that forecasted a world of networked cities (Pred, 1977). It was with Lefebvre that the link between the urban condition and capitalism was emphasized and that the urban became a coherent object of study, essentially giving birth to critical urban studies research. Lefebvre (1970) suggested that the production of urban space, rather than industrial production, was becoming the main process driving the advancement and functioning of capitalism. Hägerstrand’s work on the spatial diffusion of innovation (1952, 1967) opened the discussion on a space–time link, which became a focal point of relational thought among geographers after the 1980s.

2.1.2. From national to global networks

The breakthrough towards a global view on the urban as a constituent of finance-based capitalism continued with Friedmann’s world city hypothesis (1986) and Harvey’s position on managerialism and governance (1989), which culminated in a discussion on the global city (Sassen, 1991) or world city (Taylor, 2000) in concert with the anticipation of economic globalization
at the end of the Cold War. Transnational corporations and institutions were now identified as actors, and their power increasingly exceeded that of nation-states. Their combined agency facilitated the opening of markets on a transnational scale, largely by means of the advance of specific, “placeless” economic sectors. Despite the “placelessness” of their constituent elements, it was nevertheless possible to identify specific cities that led economic globalization by using tangible metrics. At that time, these cities were New York, Tokyo, and London (Sassen, 1991), large metropolises with the highest concentration of critical command and control functions that stood atop this transnationally organized economy.

Alongside global city theorizing, network approaches saw cities as belonging to an interrelated and dynamic network of focal nodes and knots as well as less connected or silent areas (Castells, 1996). In this nodes-and-knots metaphor that complemented the world and global city hypothesis, metropolises were leading by example, performance, and attractiveness; secondary cities followed with varying degrees of success, while others belonged to a disconnected periphery. The network approach was later thoroughly systematized and quantified into globalization indexes by a dedicated research laboratory at Loughborough University.⁴ An important side effect of this approach is the enlarging of the network frame to embrace cities on a planetary scale, viewing them as analytical subjects and gradually lifting them from the dichotomies and limitations of the global North/global South divide. A worldwide mosaic of large city-regions seemed to be overriding the earlier core–periphery system of spatial organization (Scott, 2011: 862). Remarkably, and despite considerable changes in city rankings and connectivity (Derudder et al., 2008) during the years that followed the publication of Sassen’s influential works on global cities (1991, see also 2001, 2002), the top cities in this hierarchy have remained constant in the relevant research.⁵

2.1.3. From global to globalizing

For several years after the framing of urbanization in terms of an increasingly interconnected economic realm, the bulk of research on cities concentrated on the main hubs of this global network as well as on the network itself. Despite the realization that the “global city” was a narrative that materialized

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⁴ https://www.lboro.ac.uk/gawc/
⁵ Not limited to urban studies research, but also in applied international consultancy. See, for example, the latest report by the Mori Foundation: http://mori-m-foundation.or.jp/english/ius2/gpci2/index.shtml (accessed 20 Jan 2021).
via the practices of consultants and other “experts of truth” (Rose, 1999), that narrative was strong enough to generate action, mobilize resources, and produce policies.

Meanwhile, policies for urban development and urbanization had yielded a new model of governing cities. The “governance” model (Harvey, 1989) involved the entrepreneurialization of urban politics, the restructuring of relations between the private and public sectors, the transformation of “public” sector priorities and practices, and the fundamental reconfiguration of the built environment (McCann, 2017: 317). Governance was an arrangement of governing beyond-the-state (but often with the explicit inclusion of parts of the state apparatus), organized as horizontal associational networks of private, civil society, and state actors (Swyngedouw, 1992, 2005, in McCann, 2017: 313-14). This resulted in policies that prioritized the regions, territories, and geographical scales that most successfully facilitated the accumulation and exchange of capital (Brenner and Theodore, 2002), which further set uneven geographical patterns of development; in both the global North and emerging parts of the global South, certain territories advanced spectacularly at the expense of others (Harvey, 2006: 42).

This new complexity testified to the inability of core–periphery models to illustrate patterns of unevenness. East Asian cities, for instance, rapidly and confidently embraced globalization by implementing vast urban development projects (Friedmann, 2007) and generating “highly modern institutions as well as dream-like urban futures” (Yeoh, 2005), thereby producing their “own urbanity.” Those global cities were alternatively termed multiplexes, that is, hosts to multiple spaces, multiple times, and multiple webs of relations, tying local sites, subjects, and fragments into globalizing networks of economic, social, and cultural change (Amin and Graham, 1997: 417). Time and again, these turn-of-the-century studies are being confirmed by the rapid shift of the planetary center towards Asia.6 In the unsettled and frictious articulation of old and rising competitors, urban space was treated as a product marketed in order to attract increasingly mobile capital and addressed by entrepreneurial and managerial policies.

The entrepreneurial turn and the imposition of an apparently depoliticized, technicized, and instrumentalized urban policymaking (Swyng-
douw, 2009) expanded towards the cities termed *ordinary* (Amin and Graham, 1997), those second-tier cities in production regions which had earlier lost links to core investing economies (Storper, 1995) and now found themselves at the receiving end of this network-in-the-making. But this model was and is manifested differently from place to place (Brenner and Theodore, 2002b). While global cities exhibit similarities such as their role in the global economy, extreme wealth disparities, and reliance on immigrant labor (Smith, 2002), such attributes are not necessarily definitive. Other cities do not exhibit these characteristics (Robinson, 2006). Cities in the in-between category were also described as *globalizing* (Krätke, 2014a, 2014b) in the larger context of continental Europe, which had just moved to integrate a new industrial and manufacturing hinterland following the eastward expansion of the EU.

I argue for the usefulness of the term “globalizing city” as an appropriate conceptualization of the average urban center that, on one hand, still largely accommodates “real” production functions in an era of finance-led globalization and, on the other, is exposed to the results of the “path-dependent, contextually specific interactions between inherited regulatory landscapes and emergent neoliberal, market-oriented restructuring projects” (Brenner and Theodore, 2002: 351). Well into the 2000s, theorizing on the globalizing city in and for itself remained sparse. The proliferation of entrepreneurial and managerial policies and the quest for an all-encompassing “attractiveness,” i.e. the neoliberal urbanism and its variegated geography around the world (Brenner, 2013; Brenner et al., 2010; Harvey, 2006; Peck et al., 2009), nevertheless shaped policy landscapes.

In the general discussion of a planetary neoliberal urbanism, it then makes sense to attempt to apply a planetary perspective in the analysis of processes of globalizing. This brings me to a delineation that is arguably at odds with the so-called planetary features of neoliberal urbanism as it demarcates world regions with embedded exceptional features. That is the post-Soviet or the post-socialist delineation, which is integrated into this theoretical perspective in the next section.

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7 A good early example is the introduction of the global system of media cities into the discussion (Krätke, 2003).
2.2. The city formerly known as post-socialist

2.2.1. From socialist space to globalizing place

The term “socialist city” (French and Hamilton, 1979) endures, though it has lost much of its popularity. Many Western scholars, especially in the Cold War period, wrote specifically of the “socialist city” and sought to identify its idiosyncrasy (Frolic, 1964, 1970). After all, by 1977, Brezhnev had officially affirmed that “real existing socialism” had been achieved. One could probably conclude that cities became socialist as well. In his comprehensive work on the Soviet city, Bater identified a series of attributes that differentiated “socialist” from Western/capitalist city planning and growth. In short, these attributes included: 1) limits in city size, 2) state control of housing, 3) planned development of residential areas, 4) spatial equality in distribution of collective consumption, 5) limited distances to work, 6) stringent land-use zoning, 7) rationalized traffic flow, 8) extensive green space, 9) symbolism in the city center, and 10) town planning as an integral part of national planning (Bater, 1980: 27–30).

This list became a remarkably constant reference point for consequent foreign approaches to Soviet cities. Its attributes supposedly reflected the power of the socialist state over urban land use, land prices, and the means of production (Banerjee, 2004; Hirt, 2012). Nevertheless, many of the attributes were not unique to the Soviet city. On the contrary, theoretical explorations assuming the functional zoning of activities in urban life stood at the core of 20th-century modernism, and on many occasions, it was the post-war social democracies of many European states that successfully deployed such policies across Europe. As such, what was happening beyond the Iron Curtain maintained an air of mystery for urban geographers trying to decipher the little information available on developments in the East. Seen in perspective, however, what was happening in the East was not significantly different from Western planning thought and practice; quite often, there was direct contact between the two. Regardless, the scheme of an all-encompassing state that shaped the urban environment in its entirety survived the dissolution of the socialist bloc, and Western researchers dubbed it the “post-socialist” spatial legacy.

The concept of the “post-socialist city” described the distinct imposition of market institutional order upon cities that retained their socialist spatial attributes. From an urban economics perspective, Bertaud and Renaud suggested that these spatial attributes would gradually fade in the face of: (1) the end of compact spatial form; (2) a decrease in the scale of civic and
residential spaces; (3) a tilting of the land-use balance toward commercial uses; (4) an emergence of stark social contrasts, informality, and marginality; and (5) the end of visual uniformity and the advent of a free mixing of styles. Problematic features inherited by central planning were many: Inefficient land use, long commutes, poor transportation infrastructure, air pollution, low housing quality in the absence of competition, and extensive industrial land coverage, even in prime locations (Bertaud and Renaud, 1995). Architecture and urban design scholars saw positive elements in the heritage of central planning and of the absence of land value – for instance, the abundant and spacious public spaces, comparatively low socioeconomic segregation, and a more uniform, standardized architectural look (Engel, 2006: 178).

Early post-socialist literature saw post-socialist cities as partaking in globalized capitalist competition. It was assumed that they would soon become standard capitalist cities. In the context of a weakened institutional order, they now were part of

the global semi-periphery: Neither part of the core nor of the periphery, they combined particular mixes of both and now sought to redefine their position in the world economy. It was an interesting region, as was the semi-periphery in general, because it is the dynamic category within the world economy. (Taylor and Flint, 2000, in Bradshaw, 2001: 29–30)

Central and eastern Europe (CEE), in particular, found itself in a “learning environment” characterized by considerable urgency (Peck, 2011: 780).

The perceived vulnerability and exhaustion of the inherited institutional order opened up a space for neoliberalized forms of regulatory experimentation (Bockman and Eyal, 2002; McMichael, 1996; Wu, 2008). Therefore, the post-socialist cities, especially in the parts of the former socialist bloc that sought Euro-Atlantic integration, offered rich ground for the study of policy diffusion and transfer. This is reflected in the amount of scholarship produced over these last 30 years of convergence, knowledge exchange, and institutional, political, and economic restructuring (Andrusz et al., 1996; Enyedi, 1998; Hamilton et al., 2005, in Sýkora and Bouzarovski, 2012; Ruble et al., 2001; Tsenkova and Nedovic-Budic, 2006). This research has been continuous and rich, and it has taken advantage of clustering effects and numerous synergies. Finally, it has been rather CEE-centric.

The anticipated institutional, sociopolitical, and cultural–economic transition started with transnational organizations’ expectations of a shift “from plan to market” (World Bank, 1996). Critical voices, however, warned of a transition from “plan to clan” (Stark, 1992). Local elites were seen
“embracing and manipulating both capitalism and, in some cases ‘European-ness’, to suit their own agendas” (Bakic-Hayden, 1995; Kuus, 2004; Sellar et al., 2009, in Hirt et al., 2013: 1248). In the wake of the EU enlargement and with institutions such as the European Commission committed to policy transfer, “post-socialist political and business leaders, positioned as ‘learners’, had other ideas of what these policies meant” (Hirt et al., 2013: 1248). International institutions often ignored path dependencies and the impact of the former institutional landscapes.

[Change] did not simply arrive, but neither was it unilaterally imposed. In fact, it was constructed through several decades of (asymmetrical) dialogue and (mis)-communication: The production of policy innovations and “models”, in the context of late neoliberalization, would therefore be mischaracterized as a diffusionist model. (Peck, 2011: 790)

In CEE, the impact of globalization and internationalization processes resulted in “a complex mix of hybrid economic arrangements that synthesized in a complex way the new influences of the emergent globalized flexible capitalism with the legacies of the communist system” (Young, 2007: 86, in Kinossian, 2012: 336). A few years later, the largest cities and the hybrid arrangements they accommodated had integrated into globalized economic functions (Taylor, 2004) and in effect started to

challenge the more traditional urban centers, not just in size and density of economic activity but primarily as leading incubators in the global economy, progenitors of new urban form, process, and identity. (Smith, 2002: 436)

This development, after all, coincided with the anticipated role of cities in today’s globalized flexible capitalism.

It is no surprise, then, that “post-socialism” has been described as an anachronism by scholars arguing that a 50- or even 70-year period of socialism that is already 30 years in the past is insignificant from a historical perspective (Hirt, 2013; Hirt et al., 2017: 5). Assessing the socialist period, it was demonstrated early on that sociospatial segregation and heterogeneity remained (Bater, 1989; Gentile and Sjöberg, 2006; Gentile and Tammaru, 2006), while other researchers claimed that socialist urbanization did not constitute a new model of modern urbanization but, rather, replicated “stages of a global process” (Enyedi, 1992: 106). This formed the “ecological” view in early post-socialist urban studies, which argued that urban form is the outcome of universal processes of urbanization and industrialization that
cross the capitalist–socialist boundary and that socialist cities represented a mildly distorted urban model. Opposed to this was the historical approach, which argued that in minimizing private ownership of land, housing, and the means of production, socialism produced a truly unique urban model (Bodnár, 2001; Hirt, 2006; Szelenyi, 1996, in Tsenkova and Nedovic-Budic, 2006: 9). Other discussions, however, called into question the concept of transition itself, since it implied a known start and a known endpoint (Dingsdale, 1999; Pickles, 2010; Tsenkova and Nedovic-Budic, 2006; Wu, 2003) which actually never comes. Alternatively, “restructuring” and “transformation” have been suggested, with the latter viewed as more appropriate; transformation could show that the process in question was not purely economic and that it implied neither westernization nor a linear move from some known point to another, predictable one (Brade et al., 2006).

From this discussion, I keep and utilize the model of a threefold transformation (Sýkora and Bouzarovski, 2012): The transformation of institutions, which created a general societal framework; the transformation of social, economic, cultural and political practices exhibited in the everyday life of people, firms, and institutions resulting in social restructuring; and the transformation dynamics of urban change.

According to this model, the latter transformation, that of urban change, was the slowest to come to completion. This is clear, considering the fact that the imprint of spatial form upon cities spans decades or longer. Spatial legacies have been undergoing “a constant process of acquiring new meanings, both influencing and being influenced by on-going economic and social practices and decision-making” (Clark and Tracey, 2004). This implied the endurance of a hybrid socio-spatial condition that merited scholarly interest: This post-transformational urbenscape might provide different perspectives on urbanism in general. Do socialist spatial legacies produce any such peculiarities today? I argue that this is clearly the case in the former Soviet Union, a case par excellence of post-socialism.

2.2.2. New junctures of globalization

The term “post-Soviet” is a vague one. Soviet cities stretched over a vast geographical, ethnocultural, and economic area. The Western study of these cities during the Soviet period was primarily the domain of English-speaking economic geographers. The bulk of this research appeared after the 1960s and followed a typically structuralist approach. In the works of Chauncy D. Harris (1970a, 1970b), for example, the Soviet city is presented as part of a system. However, no specificities about individual cities are offered. The
Cold War imposed practical limitations on foreign researchers and prevented delving more deeply into the individual features of cities. Despite late Soviet publications that offered short English summaries\(^8\) and emphasized local architectural traditions and urban identity, especially in the ethnic minority SSRs, many gaps remained in the international understanding of Soviet cities, in particular secondary ones.

Whether such outsiders’ studies on the Soviet city admitted their ignorance or assumed universal homogeneity, research on its successor, the post-Soviet city, immediately offered diverse viewpoints. The former Soviet Union became increasingly exposed to the worldwide integration of production, circulation, consumption, and communication; Russia joined, at least formally, relevant international organizations, and the adoption of such processes began. But the post-Soviet state resembled a rather imaginary, fictitious entity: Tools for central administration had disappeared with the USSR, and new forms of governance took their place (Segbers, 2001). With the dissolution of the USSR, there was no longer any coordination of the trajectories of cities as divergent as Tashkent and Tallinn, and they went their individual ways; a similar change occurred in the research that sought to place those cities in the international discourse on urbanization, globalization, and urbanism. Individual cities became gradually accessible to foreign scholars with diverse backgrounds and academic traditions, who started approaching them from different perspectives and with different research aims and goals. Research produced in the national context also began to be published in English. With the gradual departure from structuralist thinking and the infusion of more relational ways of conducting research, publications on formerly socialist cities started including works that attempted to merge the “hard” publication traditions of socialist urban planning with new, “soft” urban studies research.

My observation is that the research landscape of post-socialism as a whole has been dynamic, never fixed in space. The concept of a post-socialist city is always on the move, always in the making, carrying an expectation. The anticipation that the post-socialist would become international, global or, at least, Western, has followed a distinct pattern that can be identified in the ways in which cities attracted researchers’ attention. I argue that this is a movement eastward: In the early 1990s, it was the capital cities of CEE that

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\(^8\) Examples include photo-books about the architecture of Soviet Latvia (Strautmanis et al., 1987), Soviet Kyrgyzstan (Pisarskiy and Kurbatov, 1986), Soviet Estonia (Bruns et al., 1987), Soviet Uzbekistan (Kadyrova, 1987), and Soviet Russia (Zhuravlev et al., 1987).
exerted a certain charm, attracting architectural historians as well as economic geographers. Later, and especially following EU accession, post-socialist urban scholarship can be seen stepping into the post-Soviet world via cities such as Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Kiev (Borén, 2005; Brade et al., 2006; Golubchikov, 2006, 2010; Popson and Ruble, 2000). With regard to St. Petersburg in particular, the question was raised: How could “the second largest Russia’s [sic] and relatively prosperous city represent trends in a country with substantial disparities in level of regional development” (Kinosarian, 2008: 90)? Scholarly focus has stepped beyond the main, westernmost post-Soviet cities only in recent years. This has principally been the work of political scientists and geographers who saw in former Soviet cities a rich ground to study power regimes, ethnopolitics, geopolitics, and mega-events such as the 2014 Winter Olympics or the 2018 World Cup. As a result, cities such as Kazan, Sochi, Astana, and even Ashkhabad have recently appeared on the mental map of international scholarship (Koch, 2013a, 2013b; Makarychev and Yatsyk, 2015; Müller 2011, 2014; Müller and Pickles 2015; Nikossian, 2012; Trubina, 2015).

Another parallel to this gradual internationalization of the study of the territory among political scientists and geographers can be discerned in the works of the art theorists, photographers, and visual artists who embarked on urban explorations and set region-specific aesthetic currents in motion from the early 1990s onwards. Whereas the extended “post-”territory implied a degree of exoticism in the 1990s and saw a major Dutch publishing house documenting newly discovered urbanscapes in, among others, housing blocks in eastern Germany or Slovakia (Wagenaar and Dings, 2004), a quarter of a century later there is apparently nothing more to be discovered in these places. Furthermore, the construction boom of the 2000s substantially altered the cityscape in several CEE cities, leaving fragments of the previous period in the background. Remaining material artifacts such as large housing estates were privatized long ago, and their forms are as reminiscent of a “socialist” past as housing estates from the 1970s in France, Italy, or the UK. In the 2010s, the field opened up, with Romanian photographers introducing the socialist modernism of Romania and Moldova to the world, 9 art historians from the former Yugoslavia documenting war monuments near their hometowns, 10 and the discovery of Soviet brutalist modernity in Ukraine, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. This circle continues to expand

9 See, for example, https://urbanicagroup.ro/ushop/publications/guide/romania-moldova/
10 See, for example, https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/3931
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with, among others, a design publishing house from Poland working with Russian photographers to offer foreign audiences glimpses of urban life in housing estates in Siberia.\(^\text{11}\) Meanwhile, with the proliferation of digital and mobile photography, this formerly niche terrain of aestheticizing Soviet architectural legacies has attracted much broader audiences on social media. To some among these forces of (self-) exoticizing, though, a moment of reckoning apparently arrived in the mid-2010s, when, for example, a self-reflecting article published in a London-based, Russian-owned magazine covering contemporary culture and visual arts in the former socialist bloc pondered whether it might be time to “kick our addiction to ruin porn” (Rann, 2016), as the compelling title went.

What does this stepwise uncovering of cities, first by experts and now by the general public as well, mean for the term “post-socialist city” today? Clearly, this uncovering was made possible by gradually moving eastwards, and by gradually losing interest in the westernmost parts of the territory. Some urban studies scholars do still refer to Prague or Warsaw as “post-socialist” or as cities with such legacies, but this might be due to inertia. Reports by international organizations and consulting agencies no longer attribute “post-” features to these cities when reporting on the respective national economies’ global integration (McKinsey, 2009; World Bank, 2013) or when listing them in international rankings (see, for example, EIU 2020; JLL 2020; PwC 2017), in which Moscow scores quite high.\(^\text{12}\) The same applies to studies of countries themselves: In its Global Competitiveness Report 2015-16, for example, the World Economic Forum ranked the Czech Republic above Spain and ranked Poland above Italy (WEF, 2015). Economic geographers and global city researchers are on the same track: In the 2020 version of the Globalization and World Cities Research Network (GaWC, 2020), Moscow ranks as a proper Alpha city,\(^\text{13}\) with Warsaw and Prague following in the Alpha category. CEE capital cities such as Budapest, Bucharest, Belgrade, and Sofia all sit comfortably at the Beta level, where St. Petersburg is also found. The list of secondary post-socialist and post-Soviet cities that rank at the Gamma level is longer and stretches across Eurasia. This inclusion in a global paradigm is nowhere more evident than in the leading CEE cities: One could easily claim that there is nothing post-socialist even in the materialities of urban space in Warsaw, a city increasingly

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\(^\text{11}\) See, for example, https://www.zupagrafika.com

\(^\text{12}\) See, for example, https://www.bestcities.org/rankings/worlds-best-cities

\(^\text{13}\) For a detailed description of the assessments Alpha, Beta, and Gamma, see https://www.lboro.ac.uk/gawc/gawcworl ds.html.
heralded as a financial and political regional capital in the making. Together with Prague, the Polish capital now ranks alongside Vienna and Stockholm in “globalness” in the Globalization and World Cities Research Network’s latest report (GaWC, 2020).

The relevance of a “post-Soviet” concept can be refuted on similar grounds. The former Soviet Union, now consisting of several countries and sub-regions with divergent politics, geo-economical features, and degrees of global integration, is no longer perceived as a single entity. The designation “Commonwealth of Independent States” was short-lived, only partly descriptive, and not very conducive to urban studies research. However, the term “post-Soviet” is still used, both colloquially and sometimes formally, to refer to the spatial attributes of cities. Estonia and Uzbekistan were both part of the Soviet bloc, and both were post-Soviet at a recent moment in time. However, this description implies the presence of a number of common features which are simply not to be found. Are Tallinn and Tashkent post-Soviet today, and if so, on what grounds? Can the presence of Soviet-era spatial legacies such as, for example, a residential district or a tram network, justify the use of an umbrella term for cities that are otherwise clearly divergent today? Even so, those shared spatial legacies have had entirely different trajectories. Policies addressing renewal, role, and materialities and resulting in current transformational change in such cities are very uneven, as are the results of their implementation.

One could then claim that there exists no post-Soviet Tallinn or Tashkent, Moscow or Novosibirsk: The entire post-socialist and post-Soviet realm appears to be, if not globally integrated, then at least divergent to such a degree that the term is no longer descriptive. In Russia, specifically, the urban policy landscape now includes a diverse and volatile web of actors, transfer agents, local elites and growth machines, professionals and administrators, practices and feedback loops, and increasing interaction with a transnational stream of ideas that can in no way be described as post-Soviet. Rather, the highly dynamized, open-ended process of urban policy in Russia offers unexpected insights for theory that use of the term “post-Soviet” would otherwise obscure. These insights go far beyond “post-” delineations, which appear out of date when one considers these ongoing, unfinished, and spatio-temporally dynamic processes. This topic has been recently addressed by researchers who, by studying the global mobility of notions, found that the literature focusing on CEE cities tends to be theory-importing rather than – exporting (Borén and Young, 2016: 15). To this finding, Robinson added that
the capacity to read closely a very different case, to generate creative and imaginative resources to think with in one’s own research are central to the transformation in reading practices which is essential for a more global approach to thinking the urban. (2016: 650)

To her,

an opportunity lies in dispensing with post-socialism, for this would [...] open cities in this region to [...] a vast agenda of shared conceptual issues, either at the level of quite abstract or widespread processes or at the level of some fundamental conceptualizations of history, such as path dependency. (Robinson, 2016: 651)

I would add to these observations that the last 30 years’ discourse on post-socialist/post-Soviet cities has consistently concerned globalizing cities that leave their post-attributes behind one after another. This discourse can be framed as a branch of a hypothetical “globalizing city” literature whose geographical focus has been gradually shifting eastward in order to remain relevant. This scheme might be something of an exaggeration, but it assisted me in geographically positioning my contribution to this debate. This designation is of course on a planetary scale, but because the territory under study is sparsely populated, it can be attempted. Cities in the macro-region of Siberia and eastern Russia carry a low symbolic and sociocultural imprint as well as negative connotations and associations of what they stand for, and those connotations cut across time and space both on the Russian and the international mental maps.

Another dimension comes from a recent global studies perspective and refers to the critical junctures of globalization (Middell and Naumann, 2010). This term indicates the emergence of new territorializations in several world regions. I consider the conceptualization appropriate, for the entire region that was framed as post-socialist in the 1990s now functions as such: Several territorializations and regions running at different paces, accommodating urban centers whose trajectories diverge but whose actor constellations all seek, in one way or another, to address issues of becoming global and partaking in the international mobilities of ideas and policies. The next section expands further on the notions of mobility and translation.

2.3. Policies for the globalizing city

With the globalizing city having been introduced as a categorical concept synthesizing the previous sections (Ch. 2.1, 2.2), this section explores
theoretical perspectives from the policy transfer and policy mobilities literature that address the means by which ideas turn into policies and are then rendered into physical spaces. Constituting one of the starting points for this thesis, my observation concerned the flow of ideas and policies as the domain of certain cities from which dissemination to the rest of the world occurs. However, the urban policy mobilities literature has suggested that policy mutations have become a highly dynamized terrain. In this section, I attempt to conceptualize this terrain and introduce the tools with which the case studies in this thesis are to be positioned.

2.3.1. From transfer to mobilities

Following a trajectory similar to that of economic globalization, in the last third of the 20th century, the transfer of policies expanded beyond nation-state demarcations. In the United States, for example, until the New Deal era, development policies were conceived and implemented in wealthy states and then diffused across poorer ones with the expectation that this would benefit the national system (Berry, 1977). However, that last third of the 20th century also saw the intensification of exchange circuits and the transnational spread of information; the exponential growth of digital infrastructure facilitated these by utilizing a globally extended set of systems and infrastructures (Graham, 2004: 7–13). This went hand in hand with the popularization of mobile lifestyles, the institution of supranational bodies promoting cross-border exchange, and the increasing reach thereof.

The term “policy transfer” appeared as “an umbrella concept, referring to practices of national policymaking elites who ‘import innovatory policy developed elsewhere in the belief that it will be similarly successful in a different context’” (Stone, 1999: 52) but also to the involuntary adoption of new policies as the result of external pressures from supranational institutions (Dolowitz and Marsh, 1996; Stone, 2000; see also Gilbert, 2002) and to structural convergences and diffusions (Rose, 1993, in McCann, 2011: 110).

In this view, policy transfer ceased being a domain not only of the nation-state in the global North, but of the global North itself. The increased pace at which ideas travelled to diverse locations was linked to processes of globalization early on (Borja and Castells, 1997). Policies developed and refined in complex global cities came to form joints in the institutional frameworks, specificities, and path dependencies in the globalizing city, with world regions that Wallerstein would have described as semi-peripheral now having access to the international discussion on the good urban life. Precisely then, it was argued that semi-peripheral regions could be:
unusually fertile zones for social innovation because they can combine peripheral and core elements in new ways, and they are less constrained by core domination than are peripheral areas, and less committed than older core regions to the institutional baggage accompanying core status. (Chase-Dunn and Hall, 1993: 875)

This led some researchers to dismiss the very notion of an independent, “domestic” decision-making as anachronistic (Garrett et al., 2008; Gress, 1996; Stubbs, 2005 – in Peck, 2011: 774). Along these lines, some studies implied that ideas spread via consulting and institutional pipelines which are anchored into culturally or geoeconomically hegemonic cities, adopting a core–periphery approach according to which “state territorial organization [has been turned] inside-out insofar as its […] goal is to enhance and promote the global competitiveness of its cities and regions” (Brenner, 1998, in McCann, 2011: 111). Others wrote of the ensuant urban governance being “oblivious to differences. It geared globally towards restructuring the city’s spatial fabric according to the presumed ‘needs’ of global finance and service functions” (Krätke, 2014a: 1675). However, this view also reveals the problematic notion of “transfer,” which implies a static environment of giving and receiving.

While policy transfer received strong critique for its nation-centeredness, urban studies scholars circumvented the nation-state delimitation that perplexed geographers and political theorists. Indeed, under finance-led and urban-centric globalization, cities were becoming increasingly important geographical targets and institutional laboratories for a variety of neoliberal policy experiments, from place-marketing, enterprise and empowerment zones, local tax abatements, urban development corporations, public–private partnerships, and new forms of local boosterism to workfare policies, property-redevelopment schemes, business-incubator projects, new strategies of social control, policing, and surveillance, and a host of other institutional modifications within the local and regional state apparatus. (Brenner and Theodore, 2002: 21)

With the “mobilities turn” (Cresswell, 2001, 2006; Hannam et al., 2006; Heyman and Cunningham, 2004; Sheller, 2004; Sheller and Urry, 2006; Urry, 2000a, 2000b, 2004, 2007 – in McCann, 2011: 112), though, a transition in reading the production of space via policy transfer occurred alongside the argument that urban policymaking cannot be reduced to imitation and decontextualized replication. Conversely, and as discussions on the global city approach (Robinson, 2002) showed, attributing everything to knowledge diffusion from afar can be problematic.
The more recent policy mobilities literature has analyzed how policies are produced via the movement of mobilized ideas not only in North–South, but also in South–South and even South–North directions. This has turned out to be something more than a top-down imposition of models and can be associated with the diffusion of what had earlier been described as the tourist gaze (Urry, 1990) in a dynamized, not necessarily top-down process. This, in turn, is directly related to the popularization of aspirations to the good city life and their export elsewhere, and indeed anywhere, with local actor constellations gaining access to a highly mobilized terrain of knowledge transfer, circulation, and dissemination.

It is true that, in this process of opening up the discussion and internationalizing policy exchange, novel urban places in global cities were used as points of reference by policy circles that sought to export them elsewhere or anywhere, as actor constellations in numerous cities across the world turned to imitate materialities found in global cities in an effort to attract global city functions and become internationally competitive. It is also true that theorists, policy professionals, and the “consultocracy” that circulates the models for the spatial features of the good city life are usually based in well-connected and well-endowed cities. On the other hand, “governance is by no means a one-size-fits-all proposition, but the number and character of the sizes in which it comes is an empirical question” (McCann, 2017: 321). It follows, then, that urban policies project a complex geography of diffusions. However,

as the world in which policies operate becomes ever more complex and multidimensional […] undesirable trends will spread in the future by processes of more or less ‘unreasoned’ mimicry without a real performance check. (Garrett et al., 2008: 359)

Looking beyond the original diffusionist paradigm, in which policy innovations travel unidirectionally across a practically inert landscape, mobile policies also reorganize the institutional geographies and regulatory relations – what DiMaggio and Powell call the ‘structured field’ – in which they are embedded (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). […] This underlines the need to probe the institutional, sociological, and economic factors that ‘structure’ such fields. (Peck, 2011: 789)

These three factors form the backbone of the analytical tools deployed in the analysis chapters in this thesis. They are further presented as (a) moments of
normative change, (b) changes in the actor landscape, and (c) resources invested, accompanied by (d) notes on the physical outcomes during the period of this study.

2.3.2. Mobilities translated

This recent urban policy mobility research has been described as “a rolling conversation rather than a coherent paradigm” (Peck, 2011: 774). It is a growing subfield that now accommodates a broad range of critical interventions into the social reproduction of cities. Because it straddles divergent epistemologies from geography, planning, sociology and political science, urban policy mobilities research does not align with or represent a defined paradigm. (Baker and Temenos 2015: 825)

More recently, a line has been drawn between a first and a second generation of urban governance studies: The first were based in Marxian political economy and examined new urban politics, urbanization, and entrepreneurialism. The second, it is argued, keeps the original conceptualizations, which are nonetheless being augmented, challenged, and exceeded by scholars intent on understanding the diverse spatial and institutional implications of how and for whom decisions about urban life are made (McCann, 2017: 315).

This passage to a “second generation” of urban governance studies touches upon policy mobilities as well. A theoretical implication behind the question of how policies are applied in space is the extent to which translation depletes the notion of local identity. That theoretical implication is introduced in this thesis when determining to what extent globalizing cities remain recipients rather than generators of ideas and to what extent discrepancies can be made tangible and addressed as correlates of policy translation processes. This problematizing is part of a classic theoretical discussion on uneven development and lagging regions in economic geography.

This discussion goes back to an early historical–geographical materialist approach which first identified a productive tension between the fixity and mobility of capital (Harvey, 1985) and which, in later works, identified homogenization tendencies in space. On one hand, globalization was flattening the local; on the other, differences between places were heightened to the benefit of flexible capital accumulation. This paradox resulted from the fact that, by competing on the basis of their advantages, uniqueness, specificity, and authenticity, urban regimes sought to attract highly mobile capital. But while capital was now free to move around the world, urban
places remained immovable and thereby forced to adjust to events taking place beyond their confines (Harvey, 1996).

While this observation is instructive in terms of the dynamism of finance, it implies a rather negative view of the futures of urban space. Pessimistic views of the elimination of difference were expressed long before the current stimulus overflow, for example, in the aphorism that there no longer existed an *elsewhere* (De Certeau, 1984: 40), or in a vision of the entire planet becoming *placeless* (Ohmae, 1995). In the example of New York’s Times Square, the process of delivering highly regulated, consumption-oriented, recreational, generic urban spaces was termed *Disneyfication* to describe a refinement of gentrification. The transposition of the term *Disneyfication* into public space in European cities was also applied in the Berlin of the early 2000s (Roost, 2000) and was said to threaten the local identities of urban places in general. Similarly, scholars have referred to the emergence of a “fragmented glocal city” (Swyngedouw and Kaika, 2003: 12). However, globally circulating ideas and local practices are not necessarily opposites. As mentioned above, policy mobility is a highly dynamized process, with the suppression of the local being only one of several possible features.

In this thesis, the concept of translation is used to address the “how” of policy mobilities. I argue that it is an appropriate tool for approaching urban change in that it sheds light and structures the in-between that takes place between plan and reality: That is, the idea and its physical materialization in a specific social, spatial, and institutional context. My starting point is that, inasmuch as “the circulation of policy knowledge is paradoxically structured by embedded institutional legacies and imperatives” (McCann, 2011: 109), the same would be valid for processes of translation.

The early policy transfer literature tended to emphasize rationally selected best practices moving between jurisdictions, as in the case of technological innovation diffusion between colonized and colonizing societies (Akrich, 1992). Over time, the literature has adopted a social–constructivist perspective and become attentive to “the constitutive context of policy-making activities, and to the hybrid mutations of policy techniques and practices across dynamized institutional landscapes” (Peck, 2011: 774). However, the early discussion which linked the travels of ideas to globalization and colonization and addressed them as the result of configurations of power and resources remains relevant, as does Harvey’s (2001) focus on the fixity of space as opposed to the flow of capital. Why, then, do some ideas succeed in traveling while others do not? Why are some policies mobilized as best practices while others are not?
To answer such questions, urban studies scholars suggested that one should pay attention to the actors and institutions involved in new policies or in the transfers on which these policies were based (Swyngedouw et al., 2002). According to this view, the performance of translation by actors remains central: Who translates what, why so, and how? In general, translation has been utilized to determine why some ideas fail while others become policies and actions. Ideas “have been selected and entered the chain of translations acquire almost physical, objective attributes; in other words, they become quasi-objects, and then objects” (Czarniawska and Joerges, 1996: 32).

The interest lies, the authors suggested, not in the intrinsic importance of the original idea but in the idea’s timely matching of certain needs and requirements of actors. With policies being open to, among others, mutation and modification (Hirt et al., 2013; McCann, 2011; McCann and Ward, 2011), it follows that different cities reify ideas drawing on their differing strengths and legacies (Bontje et al., 2011). The area that lies between idea and policy, depending on specific conditions, however, has scarcely been researched.

Objects of policy transfer, such as ideas, “do not float freely in some unstructured universe, to be picked over selectively by a faceless elite of continuously learning policy-makers” (Peck, 2011: 791). Rather, policy transfer itself includes “institutional environments, actors and a diverse host of encounters across multiple space-times” (McFarlane, 2011: 17). Therefore, policy actors act as “transfer agents” (Stone, 2004) who do not merely distribute a policy but also transform it through circulation (Prince, 2010). Additionally, they do not operate in isolation (McCann, 2010; Pow, 2014) but are always reporting to national or other authorities.

With this section having sketched the actor landscape and the contingencies of translation, a discussion on the associated notions of space and place follows.

2.3.3. Translation forming places

As with the functionalist approach that defined the urban studies of the first half of the 20th century, urban space was been broken down into, and addressed according to, its quantitative attributes and metrics until well into the mid-20th century. The relational turn of the last third of the century suggested approaching space as the product of social relations and processes, practices and connections, as individuals construct space by experiencing it and moving through it, but also as space itself constructs and amplifies social relations and processes. If neoliberal localization has been synonymous with a different institutional organization of urban policymaking, the patterns of
localization and the establishment of new institutional geographies could only be understood through an exploration of inherited national and local regulatory landscapes (Brenner and Theodore, 2002: 368). Exploring was less a question of studying the arrival and localization of policies in different contexts and more an examination of “how cities ‘arrive at’ policies, to look at how policymakers compose their ideas amidst myriad influences from elsewhere” (Robinson, 2015). Distancing her view from analyses which focus on policy routes, the territories from which they flow, and the places that are shaped by them, Robinson argued for the need to become attentive to topological spatialities, through which one could understand the process of “making policies local – and of making up local policies” (Ward, 2006). This would allow an interpretation of “the mixing and folding of here and ‘multiple elsewheres’ (Mbembé and Nuttall, 2004) into distinctive local policies” (Robinson, 2015). It is, then, the spatialities of the globalizing city that may facilitate discovery of the translation of ideas and their reification into policy.

This brings us to the notion of space and place, which is focal to Doreen Massey’s global–relational perspective of the late 1980s and which set the background for second-generation urban governance studies’ quest to understand how and for whom decisions about urban life are made (see Ch. 2.3.1). If Harvey pointed to the need to understand the production of place in terms of fixity and mobility (see Ch. 2.3.2), Massey wrote of relationality and territoriality. For her, social processes and space can only be understood in the way they structure one another: Space is the sphere in which multiple processes and routes meet, coexist, conflict, and alter each other. From there and the open-endedness of those routes and the notion of space, she arrived at the temporal aspect of space: Spatiality as being always in the process of being made (Massey, 1999: 265). If space is the sphere in which routes cross one another, place consists of those multiple routes, and its uniqueness is borne of its position as the meeting point of a special mix of social relations.

Massey’s conceptualization of place describes cities as relational nodes which are constituted by flows of, among other things, capital, immigrants, and information. These flows connect the nodes. Place is, then, “a constellation of processes rather than a thing [...] internally multiple” (Massey, 2005: 141). The relevant literature on place-making has shown how place is “constituted through reiterative social practice [...] in this sense an event rather than a secure ontological place [...], marked by openness and change rather than boundedness and permanence” (Cresswell, 2004, in Friedmann,
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Above, I argued that one of the characteristics of globalization is the plurality of locations that are incorporated in global entanglements (see Ch. 2.1.1). With the breakup of several barriers earlier imposed by physical distance, global interconnectedness – an element that defined knowledge diffusion until a few decades ago – has been severely weakened. Space is, more often than not, becoming a loose concept. Moreover, the plurality of the locations integrated into global entanglements are to be seen as the topological translations of policy mobilities contributing to the creation of hybrid forms of place. It follows that the locations experiencing this transformation most abruptly would be those that were previously deprived of proximity and interconnectedness.

This is key for understanding what I would call the research merits of a globalizing periphery. I argue that, in current policy mobilities research, cities in formerly isolated areas such as Siberia demonstrate research merits analogous to those of cities in central and eastern Europe in the 1990s. This is because any spatially, institutionally, and politically isolated cities and regions are presumably historically less accustomed to diffusion and policy mobilities, i.e. elements of novelty, that were triggered in the 1990s. In this sense, one could recall Peck’s discussion of the early development of theories of policy diffusion:

Where might one begin to look for different, maybe more radical and disruptive accounts if not in Eastern and Central Europe […] a region in which hybrid and 'recombined' policy forms have been produced with almost tectonic intensity? (Peck, 2011: 780)

Thereby, if places are constructed by, among others, the translation of ideas into policies via a highly densified planetary information and policy exchange network, then previously dislocated hubs of these global networks of information and mobile resources are of explicit interest to the present planetary formulation of urbanism.

In this section, I have sought to characterize policy mobilities as being handpicked and translated by local actors reflecting upon institutional geographies and existing spatiotemporal features of localities in the periphery of finance-led globalization. I will address the “how” of these mobilities using the concept of translation, arguing that, like policy circulation, translation is embedded in institutional legacies and imperatives. In the next section, I discuss
three of the processes leading to policies in order to anchor my theoretical arguments, first in the terrain of policy and then in geographical space.

2.4. Three processes for urban places

The second half of the 20th century saw a range of policies addressing inner-city problems in municipalities of the global North, and it is here that the notion of renewal in its present form becomes relevant. Taken literally, urban renewal refers to some form of material upgrading in urban space, but in practice it has meant much more. Renewal policies have been adopted by city administrations under intensifying fiscal pressures (Hall and Hubbard, 1996). A restructuring of urban economies moving towards the symbolic realm (Lash and Urry, 1994) also saw the proliferation of ideas such as considering creativity and innovation as generators of economic growth. Urban renewal in that context involved both good-willed technocratic actors advocating the “human scale” as well as profit-seeking developers (Lefevre, 1996), while bureaucrats, politicians, and the community were framed as a “concert of actors” that shapes the city through a political struggle (Hall, 1980). Thus, urban renewal has entailed not only addressing material change in city districts, but also elevating the attractiveness and investment profile of city quarters and, subsequently, cities, in an increasingly competitive and interlinked world.

The multitude of variants of urban renewal thus became intertwined with ideas, policies, and strategic choices, which manifest themselves in processes that reshape space and place. On the other hand, in the peripheral context of the globalizing city (see Ch. 2.1.3), formerly known as post-socialist (see Ch. 2.2), processes that reshape space and place are also conceptualized through the notion of renewal as it originated from the range of policies addressing late-20th-century inner-city problems in cities of the global North—and under neoliberal conditions that have become flexible and adaptable (Peck et al., 2009). This makes such processes and conceptualizations excellent cases of the translation of fragments of the current forming of entrepreneurial urban governance.

Among many such processes, three will be roughly sketched here in order to support the analysis. These three processes are not clearly separated from one other. They may coexist, succeed one another, or complement one another. After all, the scope of internationalization and place creation, which can occur via translation, is an imperative. Deliberate or not, it is a thread that connects all three.
The recent policy mobilities literature has articulated the need to address the proliferating global circulation of policies (Peck, 2003; Peck and Theodore, 2001, in McCann, 2011; Ward, 2006) and specifically classifies them as follows: (1) urban policies (formally drafted and adopted guidelines and procedures setting out the long-term purposes of specific problems of governance and addressing these), (2) policy models (more general statements of ideal policies combining elements of more than one policy, or statements of ideal combinations of policies), and (3) policy knowledge (expertise or experienced-based know-how about policies, policymaking, implementation, and best practices) (McCann, 2011: 109). I utilize this categorization and structure the policies of interest, all of which address urban renewal, accordingly. They do so in several ways and on several scales ranging from the agglomeration level to the neighborhood level.

2.4.1. Boosting as urban policy

Boosterist agendas are drawn by specially formed coalitions of actors who join forces to attract investments in their city or region. This has been conceptualized as the “growth machine coalition” and comes from the earlier theory of the urban growth machine (Logan and Molotch, 1987; Molotch, 1976). This theory emerged as an attempt to explain the power relations in urban politics and to identify the main beneficiaries of such politics. It emphasizes the role of a land-based elite which seeks local or regional growth through attracting investments. Growth machine theory remains popular in analyses of urban politics, as it has demonstrated how the present imperative of growth and inter-urban competition has given rise to a “new hybridity” (Waldheim, 2010: 23) between real estate, culture, philanthropy, civic actors, and design celebrities, forming a new type of partnership for urban renewal, especially when event-related urgency arises.

The mega-event is in essence a large-scale boosterism project, including an urban branding component (as described by McCann, 2013). A part of the entrepreneurial turn in urban territorial management, it has become an important policy tool in the hands of local and national governments. Mega-events have been seen as possessing the potential to accelerate the replacement of former manufacturing and industrial areas, boost economic activity, attract capital, and draw international attention to a city (Gold and Gold, 2011; Hiller, 2000; Whitson and Macintosh, 1996). Today, some scholars view mega-events as more than simple catalysts, perceiving them as powerful engines promoting market-oriented economic policies and the privatization and commodification of urban space (Hayes and Horne, 2011; Peck and
Tickell, 2002; Vanwynsberghe, 2012). Mega-events contribute to new impulses and lend coherence to urban and regional governance (Newman, 2007); they may also enable the realization of stalled projects (Müller, 2011). A mega-event strategy also seeks intangible effects from the representation, branding, and imagineering of cities or nations for local and international consumption (Burbank et al., 2002; Persson and Petersson, 2014; Petersson, 2014).

Recent studies have referred to the mega-event as an urban entrepreneurial strategy (Muller, 2011; Trubina, 2015) while emphasizing that mega-events are by default monopoly events, meaning that “they occupy a position of monopoly in the attention economy in relation to other urban development strategies” (Cope, 2015, and Louw, 2012, in Oancă, 2015: 177). These recent studies have most often addressed mega-events in cities in the global South and the global East. What binds the cases of mega-events set in these parts of the world is an aspiration to become global. More recently, the term “spectacular urbanization” (Koch and Valiyev, 2015) has been suggested to illustrate this aspiration intermeshed with developing agglomeration-level infrastructure by overriding legislation, changing planning and zoning regulations, and granting tax exemptions to attract and facilitate investments. This has been described as a state in the “city of exception,” paraphrasing Agamben’s (2005) “state of exception,” which in turn pointed to Carl Schmitt’s notion of the exception (1922). It has been argued that in developing countries, the “exception” approach to mega-event boosterism strategies was perceived by ruling elites as the only viable option for facing the new conditions imposed by globalization and for engaging in inter-urban competition for increasingly mobile global capital. This theorizing has showed how urban strategies are forged on more or less unified and even standardized discourses (Swyngedouw, 2009: 601–620), stimulating consumption, developing investment opportunities, renovating urban areas, and branding and globally promoting regions’ competitive advantages. Others have warned of this recent fascination with mega-projects, countering it with a plea for the small spaces of the city and their importance both for the people who inhabit them and for the planners who pay them far too little attention (Friedmann, 2010: 150). This brings us to policies and a surrounding problematique closely associated with space and place on the level of everyday urban life.
2.4.2. Gentrification as policy knowledge

The term “revitalization” can actually be used interchangeably with renewal or regeneration. They are similar processes, after all, although revitalization more often refers to small-scale processes. These are the emblematic physical interventions that have become instrumental in forming branding narratives about cities in order to enhance their symbolic capital (Greenberg, 2008; Hall and Stern, 2014). Revitalization can refer to uplifting designated city parts, converting and repurposing former industrial and warehouse areas in or near central city districts, or arranging modest interventions and simple landscaping projects in public spaces. Despite its small scale, this policy is proliferating in tandem with state-sponsored, market-fundamentalist discourses as part of the increasingly frequent use of new urban sustainability strategies worldwide (Gibbs et al., 2013), which are vital for the entrepreneurial city model.

As policy tools, revitalization projects are closely related to the passage from the redistributive Keynesian city-system towards the neoliberal competitive urban center. In the early 20th century, such projects were described as “distinct devices which are intended primarily to elevate the moral tone of the segregated populations of great cities” (Park, 1915: 582). Recently, though, such projects have to some extent become synonymous with internationalization and the rise of urban competitiveness, while the rhetoric that surrounded them changed; now it was “prominent flagship projects, constituted by high-profile developments, designed as catalysts for urban regeneration” (Beazley et al., 1996, in Yeoh, 2005) that sought both to partake in competitive global networks and to make the urban landscape more profitable. A good example is the international spread of the fashion for “culture-led” regeneration and the development of “creative clusters,” with public spending anticipating returns in the forms of social vibrancy and economic benefits.

Projects emphasizing high-quality landscaping and sustainability have been at the forefront of urban revitalization schemes in the global North, with New York’s flashy High Line project (Lang and Rothenberg, 2017) being perhaps the most emblematic project of the late 2000s. An underlying purpose of such interventions is to “civilize” central public spaces and the general public through exposure to the new instrumentalization of ideas of sustainability, creativity, and culture.

Hence, given the structural conditions and imperatives that derive from this model and the diminished role of the state, such policies are designed,
implemented, and managed by a peculiar amalgam, a “new hybridity between private real estate development, donor and arts culture, private philanthropy combined with a kind of design-celebrity associated with brand name designers” (Waldheim, 2010: 23). Consequently, and instead of hosting recreational activities for the general public, such renovated areas end up being run by agencies and subsidiary bodies within and outside the formal boundaries of the state (Joassart-Marcelli et al., 2011) or by private-sector bodies and public–private partnership arrangements such as business improvement districts, conservancies, or nonprofits financed by various forms of corporate sponsorship (Davidson, 2013; de Magalhaes and Carmona, 2009; Perkins, 2013) and are often managed by volunteers associated with the above.

This kind of revitalization, now largely synonymous with gentrification, has been described as part of “the roll-out phase of neoliberalism, which depends on (...) entrepreneurial strategies” (Brenner and Theodore, 2002). This brings us to the third policy for creating place, the broad notion of participatory processes.

2.4.3. Participation as policy model

Urban renewal has also been addressed by processes of civic participatory planning. Historically, participatory planning has been, in the cities and contested urban spaces of advanced capitalism such as those of the United States, the “child” of decades of experience accumulated by community movements such as the civil rights movement and local struggles against displacement. From there, and with an increased need to coordinate social initiatives and movements, advocacy groups were born in order to provide resources, know-how, and organizational structures.14

The rise of advocacy and of participatory, community-led processes, whose role for urban design had been systematized by the late 1960s (Arnstein, 1969), covered the institutional void left open by the departure from the rational comprehensive planning model and its replacement by deregulated politics in the entrepreneurial city. With urban renewal later becoming synonymous with gentrification and privatized redevelopment,

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14 Advocacy planning has its roots in the faith in human self-determination and political pluralism. In the key work of Davidoff (1965), politics is at the heart of planning: Rather than solely a value-neutral technician, the planner represents and supports many interest groups and assists clients who do not have access to professional help, as in the case of neighborhood groups and ad hoc associations that seek to raise their voices and create their own plans. In that context, planning commissions are viewed as political rather than neutral bodies.
local movements pushed back and promoted inclusionary and community-based approaches to urban planning and highlighted the social aspects of urban renewal on a local scale.

In this sense, a major contribution of such organizations lies in the popularization of urban design and its linking to everyday life, bringing local social causes to the fore and furthering them. It also lies in constructing specific discourses and power contests within local communities. It is in this way that governance networks orient themselves toward localities and regions and cities adopt strategies that match the growing variability and flexibility of institutional topologies (Matusitz, 2010: 10).

The broad literature on place-making and participatory planning that has flourished in the last decades has adopted fundamental Marxian readings of space, embodied in Lefebvre’s “right to the city” argument, to advocate for the need to directly engage inhabitants, bringing together people living in the neighborhood and establishing a moral relation that from the start acknowledges people’s right to local citizenship (Lefebvre, 1996, in Friedmann, 2010: 159). Recent relevant literature in Russia has also been rich and followed this line of analysis (Ivanou, 2016, 2017; Tykanova-Khokhlova, 2019), focusing, however, more particularly on the contentious aspect of urban activism.

Beyond their activist beginnings, the extensive institutionalization of the practices that followed and the consequences thereof for urbanism have also come to the attention of scholars. For instance, in discussing partnerships between public agencies, the private sector, and community groups, Hastings (1996) observed that they were, despite an accompanying rhetoric about the mutual transformation of partners, primarily about re-educating and re-orienting the public sector and community groups to a privatist, “entrepreneurial” ethos (McCann, 2017: 316). In other studies, while the figure of the stakeholder has been idealized and is, in actuality, free and encouraged to participate in governance, citizens’ relationships to and influence on governance are less clear and much less codified than in the more formalized era of government. Instead, the state has a continued and increasingly “pivotal and often autocratic” (Swyngedouw, 2005: 1999) role in organizing and legitimating new governance networks.

As such, the transition to governance has often discouraged, if not inhibited, the ability of the general public to co-formulate suggestions and, in turn, to access to so-called participatory urban policymaking.
2.4.4. Translating the globalizing of translation

I would like to suggest here a merging of concepts, considering that the global city concept is a reflection of a specific era and of specific geo-historical circumstances. Indeed, the vantage point of “deindustrializing cities” in the global North as the “place” of origin of global city research has influenced the research questions asked (Barnes, 2004, in van Meeteren et al., 2016: 256). However, the globalizing city introduced here is free from such constraints and can move comfortably within and beyond the global North. This flexibility allows expansion of the discussion on policies for urban renewal. This is not a discussion on the economic performance of cities and their positioning in a globalization index, but on the trajectory of places, as the contingents of processes, always in becoming, relational and dynamized. It must, however, be added that the locational origin of this theorizing is also of importance. Subject to analysis here are not urban policies in the resource-depleted and socioeconomically repressed areas of the global North, the “silent knots” in Castell’s depiction of the network society (1996), such as Detroit in North America or the industrial wastelands of Wallonia and the Ruhr. However, the problematizing surrounding the urban renewal policies discussed here has indeed been an endeavor of such areas. Those policies have been the product of the need to pull depressed city districts or entire cities out of the cycles of disinvestment, deindustrialization, and poverty. They have been the product of a reaction to aggressive land-grabbing, displacement, and exclusion. They carry long histories of social struggle and politicization. Nonetheless, when transplanted into a booming metropolis in east Asia with its own normative mechanisms or actor configurations, such policies are stripped of antagonistic, corrective, or social support elements. They merge instead with the highly dynamized, alternate urban futures that the global East has managed to articulate and offer in the early 21st century (Yeoh, 2005). This explains, I believe, the inability of much of contemporary critical urban studies research to grasp what exactly is being studied when applying generic terms such as “neoliberalism” (Buitelaar, 2020) beyond the global North.

It is for this reason, with the theoretical framework and the three policy tools deployed in the case analysis chapters of this thesis having been articulated, that it must once again be emphasized that the subject of analysis here is not policy in cities in the global North, but policy in dynamized, as yet undeciphered areas beyond the global North and East: Cities that might lack the background of a wealthy national economy, infrastructures of knowledge,
and complex institutional environments, but that are free of the negative inertia inherited by the downward socioeconomic spiral in which cities of the global North have found themselves for decades now and the reversal of which has been the goal of many policies for urban renewal. On the contrary, the cities framed in this thesis as globalizing have been experiencing an upward trajectory. Approaching them as receptors of policies without considering the possibility that this upward spiral has an impact on processes of translation and the policy materialization thereof is a mistake, I believe, which can, like much of critical urban studies research, end in tautologies that offer little in theory and even less to the subjects. Hence, using the correct lenses may enrich the discussion and its productivity.

The concept of a globalizing city has been utilized to describe the environment within which ideas are translated into sets of actions, concrete policies, and then places. Regulations, policies, and “rule regimes” are reconstituted both upward on transnational scales and downward on national and sub-national scales. The spatial outcomes of restructuring can then be understood as planetary phenomena (Brenner et al., 2011) which, then, also find their expression in the policies, institutional landscapes, and physical materialities that succeeded the post-socialist period in the cities of countries and regions situated beyond both global North and global South.

2.5. Translations turning into place in the junctures of global territorialities

The purpose of this chapter was to develop a framework for analyzing the manifestation of ideas in policies by means of processes of translation in the context of policy mobility. The concept of the globalizing city has been proposed as a categorical concept for framing cities that have received little attention in the urban studies literature since the “networked society” discussions of the 1990s. By reviewing the validity of the categorical concepts of post-socialism, this chapter suggests that it is more useful to instead delve into the highly dynamized terrain of policy mobility.

As described, the transfer of ideas and the translatability of urban policies cuts through the narratives developed by the constellations of actors that work with the policies. In the current articulation of internationalized knowledge, these constellations include the placeless international consultancy, mobile policymakers, and local urban governments; local urban governments are presented with a broad range of promising policies from which to choose in the quest to partake in a process of globalizing in the here
and now. This is happening on a planetary scale, reflecting processes of re-territorialization. Such processes have engaged cities of the so-called post-socialist realm, a realm that has, at this point, dissolved into a large number of widely divergent ones often antagonistic to each other, each with its own actor configuration and aspirations and not at all, or perhaps no longer, immune to the entrepreneurial urban governance turn. With that in mind, relational approaches to not only urban governance but also the morphing of spatialities under the space/place dichotomy are brought to the fore. Three urban policies for renewal have been deployed here as analytical tools.

Three common processes associated with the present urbanist discourse and globalization under the “currently existing neoliberalism” (Brenner and Theodore, 2002) have been described and are used as guiding tools in the analysis. What should be remembered is the role of urban renewal in constructing, symbolically and literally, spaces where various, often conflicting interests are expressed. These processes of policy formation inform the empirical analysis of this study, not least because the actors studied have agency and contribute, through their engagement with concrete projects, by acting in the context of institutional norms that shape those processes of policy formation and by managing material and other resources for the materialization of said projects.

For local authorities in eastern Russia, the deployment of policies, be they boosterist, gentrifying, or participatory, can be summarized in two simple ways: As a new policy framework imposed on the institutional and material remains of the Soviet era, de facto outplaced by the current socioeconomic transformation imperatives, and as a pillar for constructing a counterimage in the era of neoliberal globalization by reconstituting a sense of place via entrepreneurial policies addressing the urban environment. However, and with local actors being themselves direct products of the same era, a complex process of translation may be the logical outcome of this osmosis, including learning by doing, trial and error, back and forth, and unexplored mutations. The analysis presented in the following chapters closely scrutinizes the practices, representations, and expertise through which ideas become action, policy, and material space in different contexts.
3. Research design and methods

This chapter is dedicated to matters of the research design and methods that guided my empirical work as I sought answers to the research questions posed. Following the presentation of the theoretical background of this thesis, in this chapter it will be argued that the empirical study requires a qualitative design. The chapter starts by presenting the initial considerations on building a theoretical argument on translation by studying a region. It then provides a brief description of moments that structured my approach to an area previously completely unknown to me and my attempt to cover all three potential ambitions in the study of social phenomena: To understand (providing an interpretation and meaning of a phenomenon), to explain (establishing the elements and factors responsible for producing regularities in social phenomena), and to explore (attempting to develop an initial rough description or possibly an understanding of a phenomenon) (Blaikie, 2000: 72), starting with the exploratory approach during an extended field stay in 2015. This is reflected in the choice of some cases over others, the gathering and processing of material, and the methods applied. Following the detailed discussion on research design, the analytical tools are presented. The chapter closes with a note on the limitations that provided some cues for the advancement of this study.

3.1. Reflections on space and time

My first thoughts about this thesis had involved the transfer of policies in cities within the Baltic Sea region. Things changed when, via an EU–Russia joint research program, I received a grant that allowed me to spend an academic year at the Siberian Federal University in Krasnoyarsk. Eager to study urban policies in this part of Russia, upon landing in Krasnoyarsk I came to experience what ethnologists call “the agony of facing the Other” (Ehn and Klein, in Nordström, 2008: 43). Although I was well acquainted with post-socialist urban studies, Siberia was a literal tabula rasa. My mental image of the territory was stereotypical, comprising a mixture of taiga, steppes, and coldness dotted by worn-out housing blocks and factories. Thus, upon arrival, I began to orient myself not only in a new city but in a new
world. This effort was a constant in all processes of building what would later become explanatory tools. Initially obstructed by an endless stream of stimuli and exoticizing filters, my gaze soon adjusted to the lived experience of a city which, despite some geographical and historical peculiarities, was otherwise ordinary. In the context of my research stay, I began to study the history of Siberian urbanization, improving my Russian language skills and building a circle of contacts. In the process, I became more confident as I arranged interviews, accessed a broad range of written texts, and navigated and retrieved information from governmental websites. The early decision to reject the possibility of “geopolitical remote sensing” (Paasi, 2006), which I saw as a dull endeavor, started taking shape in favor of enthusiastic engagement in empirical research across an extensive region and a significant time period. During that time, I anticipated that the study of processes of urban renewal would shed light on aspects of theory and “give meaning to abstract propositions” (Bryman and Bell, 2003).

As a foreigner choosing to embark on this process, I consciously faced challenges that arose while travelling across the territory: The issuing of visas and residence permits, orienting myself in space, unlocking all kinds of social situations, reaching interviewees, learning the language, bridging cultural gaps, and perceiving connotations. All of these challenges, which to begin with were self-constructed, allowed me to obtain information and construct analytical and explanatory tools as well as interpretive mechanisms which would have been completely inaccessible otherwise. Based on these experiences, the next section elaborates further on the formulation of a case study approach to this thesis.

3.2. Defining the cases

3.2.1. Why case study analysis?

Case studies are often focused on, and beneficial for, the study of processes (George and Bennett, 2005). Three prominent strengths of case studies are that they are suitable for triangulation, can combine different types of empirical materials and methods, and can take into account many variables (Gobo, 2011), yielding close knowledge of the subject being studied. Case studies can also offer analytical generalization and the space to develop generalizable theories (Yin, 2018). Of course, there is also concern about the extent to which generalizable knowledge can be gathered, especially when it comes to single-case studies, which focus on a specific context and cannot inform comparisons (George and Bennett, 2005; Yin, 1993). However, it can
be argued that, even though there may be merits to the claim that case studies are more limited than generalizing, they can contribute valuable empirical as well as theoretical knowledge that is also relevant for studies of other cases in other contexts. For instance, George and Bennett argued that case studies may have implications on several levels for both theory testing and theory development and that it is possible to generalize to other cases within the same class (2005: 110). The processes studied here belong to a broad group of the same class, and this allows generalizations. Of course, cases differ in many ways that have been omitted from the theoretical framework. That is also why any possible generalizations made with respect to other cases should be viewed as contingent. This is in line with existing literature (George and Bennett, 2005: 30f).

Having consciously decided to draw not only a mental image of Siberia, but a decentered one that excluded European Russia and Moscow, I attempted to identify cases in a territory distinct from European Russia that could be framed as the periphery of the semi-periphery (see Introduction). This approach has been dictated by the admission that the understanding of urban policy mobilities can benefit from a “global ethnography” of extended cases in which specific physical sites are maintained as a “primary perspective” (Burawoy, 2000: 30–31). This “extended case” method involves ethnographic engagement with participants and processes, careful attention to the external forces and connections shaping specific sites, and, as a result of this work, the extension of theory (Burawoy, 2000: 26–28).

3.2.2. Arriving at the cases
Identifying cases of urban renewal worth studying was an empirical journey that initially had to pass through the study of the characteristics of the cities undergoing urban renewal. My approach was initially exploratory, based on roughly formulated research questions. How specific was the “manifestation of an incipient transnationalization of the policy-making process, along with the hard and soft-selling of ‘global solutions’” (Peck and Theodore, 2015) taking place at the Russian periphery, by whom, and on what occasions? Spatial and socioeconomic characteristics of several cities were collected and compared. The Russian Federal State Statistics Service provides a breadth of such material, which I often consulted but always viewed as complementary: It allowed me to position my selection of cases in their contexts but did not guide the search for cases, because the search was in fact not based on measurable or quantitative information.
Making a collection of cases in several cities would have been overly ambitious. I therefore narrowed my focus and sought to identify settings that were considered “information rich” (Patton, 1990: 169) and would facilitate the understanding of the phenomenon in question. Following Onwuegbuzie and Collins on sampling schemes in mixed methods research and considering that this study would utilize a mixed qualitative method, the scheme I chose was the critical case, i.e. settings based on specific characteristics, anticipating that their inclusion would provide compelling insights about the phenomenon (Onwuegbuzie and Collins, 2007: 285).

Eventually, it became clear that the question of location was of secondary importance. The search for suitable cases was guided by the setting of three secondary preconditions. These were: (1) An initial assessment following extensive first-hand observation of cities; (2) the acquisition of a considerable amount of knowledge about a city and its specificities; and (3) personal engagement in a case that offered a certain breadth of insights and direct access to local actors. These three preconditions took shape and were fulfilled early on, not necessarily as consciously directed choices. That played a defining role in the later identification of cases. Following an initial assessment of cities, Vladivostok clearly stood out. My first visit had revealed a vibrant city bustling with tourism and enjoying several high-quality public spaces that popped out of the remnants of the city’s naval infrastructure. I was captivated by this unexpected vibrancy and the sharp contrast between past and present materialities. The second precondition was met by my long stay in Krasnoyarsk: Having become de facto familiarized with local discourses on urbanism, it was possible to orient my study and narrow it down to a specific case of urban renewal. Finally, a side activity led me to Achinsk: My short association with the social responsibility program of the aluminum company opened a window onto the socioeconomic realities of Achinsk and other small cities in which the company was active. The insights I gained as a guest expert evaluator there motivated me to more deeply explore the arrangement of this program.

As a result, I identified three cases of urban renewal in three localities: Boosterism policies in Vladivostok, in relation to the city’s hosting of an international summit, the revitalization of the main waterfront in Krasnoyarsk and the overlapping of this process with a federal program, and the participatory policies that were part of a social program in the relatively small city of Achinsk. I viewed these three cases as sufficiently representative of a present problematizing of the urban, capturing the essence of the choices,
actions, and visions surrounding the mobilization of policies on urban space and place that reached eastern Russia in the 2010s.

Early on it became apparent that there existed differences between clearly drawn state policies for urban renewal, designated municipal or regional projects, and ad hoc interventions and initiatives that appeared within and beyond those policies to form other processes corresponding to other interests; it was likewise clear that any successful methodological strategy would need to accommodate these differences. In addition to questions regarding the types of data that would best capture the multidimensional character of the theoretical framework of the thesis, there also appeared the need to situate the cases in space and illustrate the territorial dimension of translation.

3.2.3. The territorial perspective

The localities in which this thesis is situated are very different with regards to their positioning within the territorial structure of eastern Russia. They embody what I would roughly describe as the two-speed internationalization of the Russian periphery: An outward-looking part in the Far East (represented by the first case) and an extensive and inward-looking Siberian landmass (represented by the second and third cases). A short summary of these features speaks to the research design of the thesis:

(1) The first case concerns processes taking place at the southeastern edge of the Far Eastern Federal District. This a sparsely populated, thinly interconnected region. Several grandiose federal projects have, time and again, sought to consolidate it. The district’s southernmost region, Primorsky Krai, is almost detached from the rest of Russia, as it is located adjacent to China and the Korean Peninsula and faces the Sea of Japan. At the same time, it is officially viewed as Russia’s anchor in the Asia–Pacific region. For that reason, the federal government has sought to upgrade the functions and improve the image of the region’s capital, Vladivostok. Following continued federal funding as well as policies for enhancing tourism and the city’s international appeal, this city has become fairly internationalized and, in this sense, has diverged from the rest of the Federal District. The research design sought to unpack not only urban renewal in that city, but also those recent configurations in the Russian Far East.

(2) The Krasnoyarsk Krai, a chunk of land five times the size of Sweden in the middle of Russia, possesses ample natural resources and has a positive development outlook compared to many other Russian regions. The regional capital of the same name is the country’s easternmost city; with a population
of over one million, Krasnoyarsk is colloquially known as the center of an upcoming, resource-rich part of Siberia. Regional elites have sought to capitalize on this, and affirmations of the region’s impending advancement have also implied improvements to the city and its public spaces. The research design was arranged to capture this ambition to affirm the strong positioning of Krasnoyarsk at the federal level.

(3) Not far from Krasnoyarsk lies Achinsk, a locality with only regional significance. Here, one is presented with a different story, one which is very common across Russia: That of the smaller, mono-industrial city, a settlement either shrinking or stagnant but not growing. Achinsk sustains a fair level of infrastructure and job perspectives which are provided by an operative industrial and mining sector. The city also makes a good case for studying the establishment, in the late 1990s, of oligarchic control over industrial enterprises in Russia. In recent years, however, UC Rusal, the aluminum company controlling several plants in Siberia and the Urals, has been seeking to rebrand itself as a socially responsible agent committed to improving the quality of urban life. I identified the relevant social program and its urban policy component as a vehicle for the mobilization of policies in the territory itself. The research design was arranged accordingly.

This rough sketch of regional development trajectories associated with the cases, in a thesis that does not otherwise address those trajectories, was necessary because the methodological design incorporates a strong emphasis on territorial features of otherwise disparate sociospatial contexts and is aimed at bringing to light moments of the mobilization and translation of urban policies.

3.3. Data and material

For the foreign researcher, problems and questions arise from the existing literature, personal experiences, logistical constraints and results that cannot be explained (Creswell and Clark, 2011). Not being acquainted with Russian urban planning and research traditions and not having any reference point with regard to eastern Russia, I faced challenges early on. Such circumstances are typically due in large part to a lack of access to culture-specific stocks of knowledge needed to construct research instruments (Kelle, 2006). A further problem may arise from attributing characteristics to the research landscape that do not belong to the culture but stem from prejudices (Cicourel, 1964; Garfinkel, 1967; McHugh, 1968; Mehan and Wood, 1975, in Gobo, 2008: 77).
Taking note of these limitations, I decided to adopt a qualitative approach, though I initially considered applying mixed methods. The idea of using a single method was evaluated as inadequate (Morse and Niehaus, 2009, in Creswell and Clark, 2011) due to the lack of sufficient and authoritative documentation, practical limitations that are common when conducting many interviews and engaging in lengthy ethnographic studies. The idea of triangulation as “the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon” (Denzin, 1978, in Johnson et al., 2007) appeared most appropriate for this thesis. The triangulation of methods suggests a validation process that ensures that the explained variance is the result of the underlying phenomenon or trait under consideration and not of the method itself (Campbell and Fiske, 1959, in Gobo, 2016).

As urban renewal is a long-term process, there appeared a challenge in identifying and framing, in space and time, a specific case. To overcome this, I decided to adopt a methodology that would permit the inclusion of a perspective on the domestic policy landscape. This added to the dynamics of data collection, as identifying and interpreting the finest details and specificities became possible only after obtaining a more general picture. This attempt to achieve a balance between defined cases and the broader policy landscape encouraged me to de-territorialize the process of participant observation and data collection. Doing so involved difficulties, as in the case of sharing this perspective with interviewees. The decision to frame urban renewal altogether as an aspect of processes of translation was also critical. This process-oriented approach extended to involve a stepwise theoretical sampling strategy based on grounded theory methodology (Glaser and Strauss, 2009). As a result, each moment of data collection was followed by a reflection upon its contribution to the understanding of the process and additional data that would be needed to further that understanding.

The delineation of research questions guided the data collection. This is a common approach in case study research (Yin, 2018). In this study, the data collection was supported by ethnographic methods, was defined by some form of participation and observation, and was intended to yield an understanding of the social process of learning within and among communities of practitioners; the latter took shape in the process of site visits, meetings with experts, and various types of conferences and forums.
Table 3.1: Compilation of data sources

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
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<tr>
<td>Observation</td>
<td>Dedicated events</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Field notes from cities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Expert interviews</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social media</td>
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<tr>
<td>Documents</td>
<td>Federal/regional/municipal programs, dedicated reports</td>
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<td></td>
<td>News portals, social media</td>
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The research employed a wide range of pertinent documents, including government reports, public relations material and mission statements generated by consulting agents and architectural firms, local newspaper articles, blogging and social media material, websites and videos, interviews with key transfer agents involved in mobilizing policies, and observation of the materialities in public space, as well as structured sessions of participant observation in various settings where transfer occurs or is facilitated, including conferences, site visits, seminars, and lectures.

The empirical material was collected at different moments and weighed differently among the cases, while some of the data were of use in more than one case. A distinction between primary and secondary material can be made (see Table 3.1) in the sense that primary material was acquired through first-hand sources and direct interactions with actors, while secondary material was acquired through observations in public space and online research and often included information referring to other locations but fitting the contextual environment of the thesis. In the initial phase, I gathered the foundational information upon which my subsequent positioning and navigation of the material was based. Apart from interviews and observations, this included studying the history of Siberia and its cities at the state regional and university libraries. These blocks of information were revisited in subsequent steps as my interest shifted from specific locations towards policies. The missing pieces from the explanatory blocks built in 2015 in Siberia were found in a later, de-spatialized process of material collection. In this process, the arrangement of interviews aimed at following and scrutinizing urbanistic discourses rather than studying locations. Only half of the interviewees, for example, were active in the localities under study. Similarly, only approximately half of the thematic events and accompanying sessions of participant observation were situated in the localities included in this
3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

The triangulation was also dictated by the irregularity of the field visits and the diversity of the materials, which were obtained at different points in time and under different conditions.

The tension in relations between Russia and the West also had an impact on data collection: In the course of this study, I sensed the domestic discourse on urban renewal becoming slightly more self-referential, more inward-looking, and less internationalized. U.S. sanctions on the Russian aluminum industry in 2018 affected the realization of the company’s corporate social responsibility (CSR) projects. Russia’s reorientation toward Asia might have also been associated with the regional politics of the Far Eastern Federal District and even of Vladivostok. Such externalities sometimes distorted my focus during the collection and processing of data. In any case, there is nothing exceptional about external events having an impact on study subjects. I saw in this an opportunity to reflect on the broader picture of global events rather than limiting myself to post-Soviet specificities.

3.3.1. Participant observation

In the course of my 2015 stay in Siberia, I took notes on everything I noticed related to the broader question of the urban life condition and the uses of public space. This attempt was analogous to an urban derive, but on a territorial level, with the application of mapping and visual documentation. Mapping took the forms of extensive notes, sketches, and photography as well as the drawing of walking maps and the monitoring of movement in space in a process of developing “performances of memory” (Small, 1999, in Hannam et al., 2006). This activity provided a structure upon which the visual documentation was arranged. What followed was the systematizing of this material, which in its raw form consisted of approximately 20,000 photos and 100 pages of diary notes on 16 cities in Siberia and the Far East (Figure 3.1). This material was organized into a photo- and notebook of 2700 selected photos and 340 pages of detailed explanatory notes and map sketches. The comprehensive draft helped me to narrow my focus to specific urban renewal processes and to build solid knowledge of eastern Russia.

Having roughly defined the three cases I wished to examine, subsequent phases of material collection were determined more by processes than by specific geographical entities and delineations. I thus managed to think more generally, step beyond spatial limitations, and draw a mental map of urban policies before focusing in again for the analysis. In total, between 2015 and 2019, I visited roughly one-fourth of Russia’s federal subjects and half of the
federal subjects that comprise the Siberian and Far Eastern Federal Districts.\textsuperscript{15} Much of the ensuing documentation, amounting to approximately 200 pages of notes and 6,400 photographs, was not further processed. However, the background activity of documenting thoughts, taking notes and photos, and drawing maps and diagrams in itself was very useful in sharpening my observational skills.

These skills were put into practice in participant observation sessions carried out at actual public spaces and construction sites, but I focused more on different industry-related events such as fairs, workshops, exhibitions, and conferences (Figure 3.2). Artifacts collected during observations included photographs, books, leaflets, promotional brochures, and presentation materials. Observations of events at which policy experts and private professionals met and discussed present trends and debates in urbanism were used to develop my understanding of the field in general and of the selected cases’ contexts. These observations allowed for additional dimensions to be added to the understanding of processes of urban renewal by means of the words and public stances of the persons shaping these processes in the peripheral settings identified in the study. This allowed me to explore and map the professional culture and current debates in urban studies and design in Russia at large. It was possible to capture the discourses at play in talks given at these events, while informal conversations offered insights into how practitioners and policymakers talk about urbanism and how they position themselves in the discourse. I witnessed the circulation of concepts and took note of buzzwords introduced by experts and consultants, appropriated by ministers and mayors, and communicated to audiences. I observed how different actors carried themselves and behaved with regard to access to decision-making. I took note of the public dissemination of information and the buildup of an entire discourse on urbanism.

\textsuperscript{15} The federal subjects are the constituent entities of Russia and consist of republics, krais, oblasts, autonomous okrugs, and cities of federal importance.
Figure 3.1. Space and duration of observations (field visits)
Figure 3.2. Space and time of participant observations (events) and interviews
Together, these approaches offered the opportunity not only to triangulate data, descriptions in interviews, and documents against facts (Becker and Geer, 1957), but also to gain a richer and more multifaceted account than would have been possible through interviews and documents alone.

Several of these events were open to the public, but most required prior registration. Others were more or less exclusive, either by design or because they targeted rather small expert audiences or creative professionals. Usually having registered myself or having been invited by interviewees, university staff, or other informants, I generally faced no difficulties in gaining admission to such events. As the observations were carried out in different settings, the degree of participation varied. At conferences, for example, I sat among the audience taking notes on what was said in the presentation. In other moments, I interacted with informants. As a result, the type of observation varied according to the situation as the relation between observer and actors in the field moved from one of mutual awareness to one of a detached, anonymous observer taking notes on what was happening. Participant observation sessions also included very conspicuous moments in which I was invited to give an expert opinion or formal greeting in front of other attendees or to present my research in one of the conference sessions. In such instances, I found myself at the center of attention, if only for a few moments. Extensive field notes were taken during and after these sessions of observations, including the noting of reflections and insights. A list of events that yielded meaningful notes and data is presented in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2. Events attended

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>CITY</th>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>TYPE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015.02</td>
<td>Krasnoyarsk</td>
<td>Architecture/Construction</td>
<td>Exhibition/Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015.02</td>
<td>Krasnoyarsk</td>
<td>Economic Forum</td>
<td>Exhibition/Conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015.04</td>
<td>Krasnoyarsk</td>
<td>Arch. Heritage in Siberia</td>
<td>Academic conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015.05</td>
<td>Barnaul</td>
<td>Визуальный облик</td>
<td>Art event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015.06</td>
<td>Krasnoyarsk</td>
<td>Rusal</td>
<td>Corporate event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016.06</td>
<td>Moscow</td>
<td>Urban forum</td>
<td>Exhibition/Conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016.06</td>
<td>Yaroslavl</td>
<td>Tekstil art evening</td>
<td>Art event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017.07</td>
<td>Moscow</td>
<td>Strelka/New Normal</td>
<td>Lectures/Workshops</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 3.3.2. Interviewing actors

The second pillar of the method design consisted of interviews. Given the many different parameters among the processes I chose to study, I could neither select all interviewees in the same way nor follow a structured interview guide. Instead, I selected a semi-structured approach (Weiss, 1994) in order to allow for flexibility. In total, I conducted thirty-one semi-structured interviews, most of them expert interviews (Table 3.3). Being familiar with this professional context, I saw myself as an active interviewer (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995) using my own experiences to initiate and shape the dialogues. I asked interviewees to move away from formal testimonies and to instead discuss their own personal reflections on processes for urban renewal of which they were often co-producers. An early consideration was to uncover the multitude of realities and capture a satisfactory range of opinions. Three broad categories of policy mobilizers were identified: Local policy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Type of Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2017.07</td>
<td>Moscow</td>
<td>Urban forum</td>
<td>Exhibition/Conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017.09</td>
<td>St. Petersburg</td>
<td>Strelka Week</td>
<td>Lectures/Workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017.09</td>
<td>St. Petersburg</td>
<td>Industrial Petersburg/Sevkabel</td>
<td>Guided historic tour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017.09</td>
<td>St. Petersburg</td>
<td>Constructivist Petersburg</td>
<td>Guided historic tour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017.09</td>
<td>St. Petersburg</td>
<td>Territorial Development Forum</td>
<td>Exhibition/Conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017.10</td>
<td>Vladivostok</td>
<td>Design code</td>
<td>Lectures/Workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017.10</td>
<td>Vladivostok</td>
<td>Exhibition opening, Zarya</td>
<td>Art event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017.10</td>
<td>Vladivostok</td>
<td>Creative arts/multimedia</td>
<td>Exhibition/Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017.10</td>
<td>Vladivostok</td>
<td>Guided tour in Milionka</td>
<td>Guided historic tour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018.04</td>
<td>Krasnoyarsk</td>
<td>Strelka Week</td>
<td>Lectures/Workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018.09</td>
<td>Stockholm</td>
<td>Strelka/New Normal</td>
<td>Lectures/Workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019.04</td>
<td>Moscow</td>
<td>10th Scientific Conference, HSE</td>
<td>Academic conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019.04</td>
<td>St. Petersburg</td>
<td>ISD Forum, Art-Play Creative Space</td>
<td>Lectures/Workshops</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

actors, the international policy consultocracy, and informational infrastructures. The broad category of local policy actors included policy and design professionals. These were either state-employed employees or private consultants; I started identifying such actors, considering them to be a critical case group.

Half of the interviews were conducted in 2015. That being an initially exploratory phase, inasmuch as the research aims were yet to be defined, my choices of interviewees were largely dependent on the question of accessibility. Trying to position myself in the context, I followed the snowball effect method and approached people from diverse fields, which in itself helped mold my research. The remaining interviews were conducted between 2016 and 2018 and involved rather strategic choices and demarcations of the different profiles of interviewees. During my 2016 field visit in European Russia, I met more people involved in socially oriented projects, while my 2017 field stay in Vladivostok led to interviews exclusively with young practitioners. Other groupings included academics as well as regional representatives of social programs by Rusal. Among the former, the more established were more reluctant to meet with me, and on some occasions I was discouraged from contacting certain people. On my follow-up field stay in Krasnoyarsk in 2018, now equipped with a rich understanding of the context, I could seamlessly navigate local news, press announcements, and the personal social media accounts of main actors who were debating urban renewal online. Having realized that I now effectively had access to a virtual civic space that could largely substitute for in-person meetings, my approach shifted. I put my efforts into drawing material from these sources and then conducting a handful of targeted and substantial interviews.

Methods such as interviews have different connotations in different cultures (Flick, 2014). Thus, in balancing between expectations from abroad and local ways of being, a rather “glocal” approach (Gobo, 2011) assisted in interpreting interview or observation findings. Following Fielding (2014) on the implications of globalization for social theory, the concept of glocalization appeared to be fitting in my attempt to position the research in a sound epistemological frame. Interviews are viewed not as a static process of obtaining information, but as moments in which the barriers are often blurred and knowledge is co-created between the two actants, since both parties are active during the interview (Czarniawska, 2004: 47). I did not regard interviewing as merely a process of extracting information but, rather, as a complex social interaction. Many interviewees were not acquainted with interview processes, so sometimes I was invited to events, shown around
offices or even private spaces, and had no opportunity to ask all of the questions I had intended to. However, such interviews became something akin to ethnographic study sessions, as the exposure to physical and social artifacts provided much more information than I could have asked for.

The interviews were of different lengths. Some lasted no longer than 20 minutes, while others took more than two hours. Many of the interviewees had a vested interest in the projects discussed. Some had integrated opposing viewpoints due to their diverse backgrounds and professional activities. As a rule, discussions with these individuals were among the most informative. Many of the interviews were conducted outdoors, in public spaces. I always asked interviewees to choose a location convenient for them and, ideally, one relevant to the projects in question. For example, being able to walk along a construction site together with the chief architect while he was coordinating the works, and being able to ask questions on the specifics of the project taking shape in front of me, added substance to my understanding. On such occasions, the conversation flow matched walking along physical artifacts and discussing very specific details on location. Interviewing thus became a type of observation (Czarniawska, 2004: 49) that provided critical insights. These moments provided first-hand accounts of how urban renewal was occurring and how the urban spaces were being transformed on the spot. They also allowed me a glimpse of the actors’ personal universes. In this way, I sensed that I was gradually gaining an understanding of the social situation under study.

Approximately half of the interviews were recorded. In the remainder, basic notes were taken during the interview and extensive notes were written down immediately afterwards. The recorded interviews were later transcribed. Photographs taken in or outside the setting of the interview helped me to memorize the specific day and moment and functioned as small field notes to myself. When quoting interviewees in this thesis, I use my own translation of the Russian original, usually slightly editing some words to keep the flow and the substance of what was said.

To ensure some degree of homogeneity in my approach towards the interviewees and to retain a structure while remaining flexible, I designed a thematic interview guide (Aspers, 2007). The guide remained more or less stable but was on occasion slightly adapted depending on the interviewee and the specifics of the situation. It consisted of four basic parts: In the first, I gathered descriptive information about the policies in question. Part 2 encouraged short personal reflections on ongoing urban renewal projects. Part 3 addressed the relations between state and municipal authorities, private
construction companies, and design professionals. In the final part, I asked interviewees to reflect on a personal level on the function and qualities of public space in their city. My main goal was to have a free-flowing conversation, regardless of the amount of technical detail it contained.

I conducted most of the interviews in Russian. As a rule, this was out of necessity, since most interviewees spoke little or no English, but I had been aware of this beforehand. This early realization pushed me to improve my Russian as much and as quickly as possible, which is the reason I abstained from conducting any proper interviews before the midpoint of my research stay in 2015. Indeed, early on I had sensed that, when speaking in English, people became conscious of talking to a foreigner and entered a rigid state that inhibited the flow of their thoughts. In such cases, nuances disappeared. Choosing between holding a conversation in accurate English or in clumsy Russian, I opted for the latter. And indeed, although I was not yet proficient, by mid-2015 my Russian had progressed from clumsy to a level sufficient to formulate accurate questions and hold a conversation with little prior preparation while simultaneously either taking notes or recording. The rationale was that I might be much more accurate in English, but in most cases my interviewees were not. I therefore sacrificed the linguistic upper hand in order to ensure that the responses of my native Russian interlocutors would be uninhibited, expressive, and substantial. After all, my notes and recordings were there to assist me in the phase of processing the information later on. The names of individual interviewees have been omitted from the list of interviews (see Table 3.3), which includes city names, months, and sectorial affiliations of the interviewees, emphasizing their roles in the processes discussed in the analysis.

Table 3.3. List of interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>CITY</th>
<th>BRANCH</th>
<th>COMPANY/ORG.</th>
<th>POSITION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2015.03</td>
<td>Krasnoyarsk</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>Siberian Federal Univ.</td>
<td>Professor</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2015.04</td>
<td>Krasnoyarsk</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>Grazhdanproekt</td>
<td>Head architect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2015.04</td>
<td>Krasnoyarsk</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Rusal</td>
<td>Director, Center for Social Innov.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2015.05</td>
<td>Krasnoyarsk</td>
<td>Nongov</td>
<td>Interra/MitOst</td>
<td>Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2015.06</td>
<td>Novokuznetsk</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Rusal</td>
<td>Regional manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2015.06</td>
<td>Barnaul</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Freelancer</td>
<td>Curator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>Status</td>
<td>Institution</td>
<td>Role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>2015.06 Barnaul State</td>
<td>Altai State University</td>
<td>Academic staff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>2015.06 Krasnoyarsk State</td>
<td>Siberian Federal Univ.</td>
<td>PhD candidates</td>
<td>Docent, Economics Dept.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>2015.07 Krasnoyarsk Nongov</td>
<td>Mikhail Prohorov Fund</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>2015.07 Krasnoyarsk Nongov</td>
<td>Museum Mira</td>
<td>Journalist/curator at museum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>2015.08 Khabarovsk State</td>
<td>Pacific National Univ.</td>
<td>University teaching assistants</td>
<td>Deputy Gen. Director</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>2015.09 Achinsk Nongov</td>
<td>Rusal</td>
<td>Director, Achinsk branch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>2015.09 Novosibirsk State</td>
<td>City Dept. of Culture</td>
<td>Consultant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>2016.09 Moscow Private</td>
<td>Rusal</td>
<td>Head of Center for Social Projects</td>
<td>Co-founder</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>2016.09 Yaroslavl Nongov</td>
<td>Tekstil Cultural Space</td>
<td>Founder</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>2016.09 Kostroma Nongov</td>
<td>Stantsia Cultural Space</td>
<td>Head architect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>2017.10 Vladivostok Private</td>
<td>Skameyka Architects</td>
<td>Head architect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>2017.10 Vladivostok Private</td>
<td>Lapteva Architects</td>
<td>Head architect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>2017.10 Vladivostok Private</td>
<td>Concrete Jungle</td>
<td>Head designer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>2017.10 Vladivostok Private</td>
<td>various</td>
<td>Creative professionals, activists</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>Sector</td>
<td>Position</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
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<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>2017.10</td>
<td>Vladivostok</td>
<td>Private Art group/</td>
<td>Architect/artist, former chief artist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>activism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>2017.10</td>
<td>Vladivostok</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Zarya Art Center Chief curator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>2018.05</td>
<td>Krasnoyarsk</td>
<td>Private Proektdevelo</td>
<td>Co-founder and director</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>2018.05</td>
<td>Perm</td>
<td>Private MLA+ Russia</td>
<td>Urban and land use planner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>2018.05</td>
<td>Ufa</td>
<td>Nongov</td>
<td>Urban Bairam Co-founder</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>2018.06</td>
<td>Krasnoyarsk</td>
<td>State Siberian Federal Univ.</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>2018.06</td>
<td>Krasnoyarsk</td>
<td>Private Ardis Architects</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.3.3. Documents

Written material was extracted from sources including official documents and reports, news outlets, and social media announcements. These sources were utilized in steps and following the clarification of cases: I first studied reports on the urban and socioeconomic development of cities prepared by federal and regional ministries and municipal departments. With the cases approximately defined, I studied media coverage of each of them. This helped me pinpoint key moments and construct timelines of processes. I then browsed the social media pages of municipal and state organizations, private companies, and other actors involved in the cases. This process was facilitated by the stepwise improvement of my Russian language skills. The integration of observational techniques (Flick, 1999) alongside physical and online study provided a methodological insight. The material collected from documents, then, consisted of three main bodies: Public official documents and scientific reports, formal journalistic coverage of urban renewal, and official social media coverage of the same.

Official documentation provided texts with authoritative statements. These were found in several types of texts: Federal legislative acts and amendments, reports on territorial and socioeconomic development, research reports commissioned by regional authorities, municipal decrees, and press releases by ministries and local administrations. I also considered as official documentation the news bulletins published by the Moscow-based research and consulting office, as these bulletins were central to the analysis of the second case. Equal weight was given to the reports and bulletins published by the aluminum company’s center for social programs, which were central to the third case study. These amounted to 560 documents consisting of a total
of approximately 4,000 pages, which formed the secondary material (Table 3.1) of the study.

The second body of documents came from nationwide, regional, and municipal media. The last of these, in particular, often compensated for instances in which official documentation was unavailable, not yet published, or did not specifically and address questions of urbanism and urbanity. I soon found out that most such websites had an available electronic archive that, in many cases, spanned more than twenty years. This enabled access to and study of 1,684 articles that covered the selected urban renewal processes for all of the 2010s, but it also provided a rich background for the policy choices that preceded them in the 2000s and (less so) in the 1990s. This material was of great assistance in building an understanding of the local discourses and an orientation in the actor landscape; in some cases it helped me to identify possible informants. The material was also important later, when triangulating data during the writing phase.

Since the amount of raw data was very large, an important task in the process of extracting information from these sources was efficient filtering. This took place by means of an accurate delineation of search parameters and keywords to match local specificities and linguistic twists, but also through the limited use of specialized software to pull information from social media accounts in raw text form. This was useful, for example, in the case of the social media pages of Rusal’s Center for Social Programs on international and Russian social media platforms. From the international social media account, a total of 3767 posts, from the creation of the page in April 2011 until December 2018, was retrieved, exported, and analyzed with the help of the freeware program Facepager. For the Russian social media equivalent and in the absence of compatible software, I manually checked all posts from October 2015 until December 2018. Similar tactics were used to process information from press releases on governmental websites and local and regional news outlets.

Processing this amount of information revealed ways of speaking about the urban: The new role of municipal employees, the entrepreneurial mayor, the public–private partnerships, the conflict between established norms and new international practices, and so forth. Many of the news outlets from which information was extracted have a distinct pro-administration point of view. I chose to view this material as coming from unofficial municipal press agencies, which in fact was also the case with some. Anti-governmental media outlets, on the other hand, often constructed opposing narratives by emphasizing such aspects as corruption or nepotism in local policies. I
detected different nuances in outlets covering urban culture and youth lifestyles, which tended to accommodate alternative viewpoints.

The third source of written information came from social media platforms. After identifying policies and actors, I considered what the actors themselves had to say. Public posts from the following were taken into consideration: (a) Regional and local political figures, (b) civic organizations and/or individuals employed by them, (c) public groups and pages covering city life and urban culture, and (d) influential individuals, including experts in the field of urbanism, based in the cities in question or elsewhere. Nuances and hints were everywhere in the comments sections, which I viewed as constituting alternative narratives.

This exposure often resulted in information overload. For instance, it was hard to filter information on local and regional political rivalries and scandals in the first case; it was tempting to delve into the controversies surrounding the Moscow-based urban consultancy group that was involved in the second case; similarly, it was difficult not to take into account the activities of the billionaire owner of the aluminum company central to the third case. Filtering and processing those factors helped me refine the cases and build explanatory structures; they were also of help in constructing a chronology of events.

3.4. Analytical method

The method of processing the material can be described as process tracing. As mentioned above (Ch. 3.2.1), case studies help study processes, and process tracing is a way to use the potential of case studies to investigate causal complexity and multiple causation (George and Bennett, 2005: 205). In this kind of study, the search is for a pattern among different aspects. This was an underlying principle of the material collection. To analyze the material, I created stories and structured them in relation to the theoretical framework.

In order to formulate the translation of mobilized policies in urban renewal as a process over time, an account of the process was constructed. The basis of the construction was the idea that all three cases involved a) processes of challenging previous policy frameworks and b) the mobilization of new policy elements, which in turn were followed by translation and the establishment of new urban policies. The account was a description of how this process played out. However, the demarcation of clear cases of policies was a challenge. The information I sought was not necessarily to be found in
texts. Despite the breadth of local media reporting on urban renewal, on many occasions, especially in the early stages, I was not able to identify a process. This was because processes were not presented in official documents and because discussants did not refer to any events or actions as belonging to an urban renewal policy. However, my observations showed me that this was indeed what was happening, despite the fact that it was not being framed in the words one might anticipate. With time, I realized, therein lay the most interesting part: It enabled me to look behind words and take the step of structuring the study upon certain conceptualizations.

The material was utilized to generate a number of components of the process. From there, an intertextual chain was generated of sequential points that entailed policy mobilities and pointed to their translation. Taken together, the interviews, observations, and text documents were interlinked to constitute a narrative. The text analysis was explorative in nature and focused on understanding; it was carried out by reading documents and transcribed interviews, studying and systematizing other text resources, and organizing the photographic and other observational material. By placing the events in consecutive order and drawing timelines of the process in the form of diagrams and sketches with detailed notes, a structured overview of the development of urban policies emerged from the material. The result was a timeline of the process of policy change.

From the structured process, I continued the analysis with the identification of conditions. The aim was to identify mechanisms through which processes evolved towards the translation of urban policies, policy models, and policy knowledge. The concept of mechanisms is here defined as referring to theoretically informed statements that are used to explain how one event causes another event to occur. Statements about mechanisms are distinguished from other explanatory statements such as statements of true causality, correlation, necessary and sufficient conditions, storytelling, or prediction (Elster, 1989). Stinchcombe, for example, asserted that the objects of analysis are causal mechanisms and identified five main forms of mechanisms in social life: Networks, individual actors, rational choices, situations, and patterns (2005). In this study, I also identified conditional adaptation as a general mechanism. Stinchcombe highlighted the perplexing nature of the term: “[A] mechanism is a little theoretical machine, a mere ‘device’ out of which larger structures of theory can be attributed. It translates causes into effects” (2005: 238). Similarly, I presumed conditional adaptation to be a theoretical machine that could guide the analysis. Stating the causal mechan-
isms aims to give “a deeper understanding about why and how social processes function” (Elster, 1989: 3–10).

The analysis of mechanisms was used to assess translation. Actors, norms, outcomes, and resources were introduced as analytical tools. Actors were considered to be the individuals who, by demonstrating agency, have produced critical results in the sequence of the process of translation. These actors often formed parts of agential constellations, representing state, private, or other interests. The combinations of the actors and constellations identified as meaningful for the process were static in neither space nor time.

The normative environment for translation was prescribed by assessing the stages of the development of a contemporary problematizing of the urban. This was done by interpreting, in general terms, what state documents described as desired public space and urban life quality as well as the specific improvements anticipated by urban renewal. If, for instance, positive impacts of revitalization were emphasized in normative documents, I identified the conversion of the general gentrification discourse into a self-serving developmental imperative as an indication of normative change and observed how actors positioned themselves in relation to this normative translation. Worries about specific features of gentrification that are almost unanimously framed as negative in international scholarship were found, for example, to be absent from the official discourse in Russia. Such features were viewed, in contrast, as proof of successful cases of processes of urban renewal. Such insights added depth to the analysis.

Identifying the translational resources entailed dividing them into two subsets: Support in the form of finances and knowledge provision of hands-on skills. The translational resources in the form of financial provision were authoritative gestures, usually state-led, anticipating or commanding the implementation of projects, while knowledge-intensive resources were directed to existing actors or took the form of introducing new actors and assigning them tasks that would catalyze or enhance translation. This was to determine whether, and to what extent, resource provision facilitated translational processes by, for example, the internationalization of local discourses and the building of place-based knowledge infrastructure. Finally, translation output was introduced into the analysis in order to assess how the combined effects of actors, resources, and normative environment arrived at physical materialities, i.e. outcomes, in urban space.
3.5. Note on linguistic positioning

Early in the process of collecting and assessing the material, I came across an issue regarding the use of language. First, I noticed that official state documents often made use of Soviet terminology, a typically modernist, growth-oriented vocabulary with little in common with today’s international urbanist jargon. Being equipped only with the latter, I needed to familiarize myself with the former in order to assess the present, which I did by studying Soviet compendia on territorial development, urban design, landscaping, and architecture. On the other hand, it was impossible to ignore the frequent use of foreign words in fairs and expos, especially by young, outward-looking actors and consultants, presumably to denote international expertise. In participant observation sessions or during interviews, this jargon stood in dynamic relation to the official “Soviet” style. That produced hybrid terms, not always comprehensible, that underlined Russian transliterations of international terms with contextual connotations.

Navigating the diverse ways of speaking about the urban experience puzzled me for quite some time, but it also allowed me more reflections on the context and offered a glimpse into the parallel activation of multitudes of meanings: I asked myself when this activation had taken off in Russian and when it had reached the actors living and working in eastern Russia. Although this discussion is not of primary importance, it did have an impact on the research design of the thesis. A few examples follow of how I positioned myself in relation to this linguistic issue.

Using the term “urban renewal” in Russia poses some initial challenges that need to be clarified. First, the English term itself carries a wide range of meanings, from small beautification interventions to the full-scale reconstruction of entire city districts. In Anglo-American academic, design, and engineering jargon, the terms “urban regeneration” and “urban redevelopment” may also be used and imply minor differences. Urban renewal refers to programs used to address phenomena of material and infrastructural decay in order to create space for better housing, businesses, and more and, as mentioned in Ch. 2.4.2, is often a highly politicized term. In Russian, the transliteration of the term revitalization (revitalizatsia) most closely approximates this process. In context, renewal is described as a process closer to recreation and is formally non-politicized. Already at this point, a contested relationship emerged between what I understood to be a renewal project, what my interviewees meant by the same term, and how popular media used it to depict ongoing processes.
Also telling is the ambiguity of the Russian term *blagoustroistvo*. This term is not easily translated into English, but it is strongly rooted in the domestic discourse, firmly present in both former Soviet bibliography and present professional jargon, and unanimously applied to projects of urban renewal currently taking place in Russia. The word literally describes the act of purifying through reconstruction and, by extension, carries a poetic if not religious connotation. Hence, rather than renewal or regeneration, it is closer to beautification or revitalization. In this study, the more technical term *landscaping* will be used instead. This choice was made because, in the English language and professional terminology (but also in other languages: *Landschaftsarchitektur* in German, *landskapsarkitektur* in Swedish, etc.), the term *landscaping* can describe small-scale interventions in public spaces which, in the case of Russia, are also referred to as *blagoustroistvo* works; the term *landschaftnyi dizain* (“landscape design,” Russianized from the German *Landschaft*) is comparatively limited in its descriptive power.

Another example is the Russian discursive use of *gentrification*. In Western literature, the term has, since its conception in the 1970s, carried more or less negative connotations with regards to the social impact of the processes it describes. The recent transliteration of the term into Russian (*gentrifikatsyia*) is, at least to my knowledge, rather neutral. It was rarely used in documentation and was unknown to several among my interviewees. Considering the long history and wide international use of the term, the fact that professional designers and planners in the regional Russian context were unaware of it struck me, and not only as gap in technical vocabulary. Furthermore, similar observations were made with regards to the country’s central discourse: In a prominent article in late 2018, the head economist of the main Muscovite consulting agency argued that the Russian welfare state was a *burden* to gentrification, arguing that one cannot have capitalism when pensioners live in apartments in Moscow’s prime districts which should in fact be inhabited by high earners (Korotkova, 2018). Among international policy circles, even in the most market-oriented, it is inappropriate to bluntly favor spatial stratification. However, in Russia such ideas were apparently championed by an agent also cooperating with socially sensitive Danish urbanists on other urban renewal projects. Although this article elicited reactions (“Urbanist ‘Strelki...’”, 2018), the term “gentrification” remained lost in translation; in the ensuing discussion (see Antonov, 2018 and Demurgin, 2018), it was used in all imaginable ways (including with reference to the sixteenth-century British gentry) except the way in which the term is in fact used internationally.
A term central to the analysis has been that of public space: For almost a century, the concept of public space in the Russian language was approached from a standpoint that emphasized mass commemorations and festivities honoring the Soviet state and the working class. Bridging this difference has now become possible as the concept (obschestvenAYia prostranstva) has been reintroduced and terms describing analogous conceptualizations are now in use. Different connotations, however, remain embedded in the Russian language.

3.6. Ethical considerations

During my first stay in Krasnoyarsk, the question of positioning myself among informants and others arose naturally. In subsequent field visits, I had ample opportunities to reflect on this positioning. As is the convention with ethnographic methods applied in the social sciences, I always explained to informants beforehand who I was and what my research was about, whether in the first e-mail communication, when asking them to connect me with other people, or when approaching informants directly during participant observation sessions. During interviews, I was careful to emphasize that my study would result in an academic publication. During fieldwork, the exact aim and research questions were not yet formulated, but I was always able to provide information on the general purpose of the study. I explained that I was conducting the research alone and, when recording the discussion, that I would process the audio file myself. None of the interviewees objected. I always asked whether I could refer to them by name. No discussant requested anonymity. On the contrary, some even expressed the desire to see their names in my study. The list of interviews provided here has, however, been anonymized, since it was not clear to me whether all discussants understood that this would be an academic book subject to copyright laws. In any case, I always sought to divert focus away from personal stories and towards the processes.

Indeed, I did not attempt to interview any person as an individual or to obtain any personal information beyond what was necessary to construct a general professional profile. It was always clear to me that I was interacting with junior or senior experts, private entrepreneurs, state employees, company representatives, and academics. Most discussants were older or slightly older than I, and the few who were younger were close to me in age. This was an advantage as it allowed a positive atmosphere in which informants were willing to explain things in detail. There were, however, times at which I
wished I had conducted more formal meetings. The fact that I demonstrated an eager interest in smaller localities in combination with a genuine and visible interest to speak in Russian led the discussants to welcome me and to be willing to help me. In general, I think that most interviewees saw in me a foreign urbanist interested in exploring less walked paths in their cities. The field work or, I might say, the entire project, took place amidst a deteriorating relationship between Russia and the West, and this was palpable in academic cooperation as well. I tried to maintain distance from any kind of judgement with regards to international events and externalities beyond the purpose of this study.

3.7. Practical limitations

The choices involved in designing and carrying out a study produce both strengths and limitations in terms of what data become available, what the scope of the findings is, and what questions can be answered using these findings. The design of this study entailed several such limitations.

First, the study focused on processes of urban policy formulation in an institutional environment and geographical location with which I had hitherto been completely unfamiliar. This was a conscious choice in order to augment the anthropological, exploratory component of the study: The puzzle was purposefully complex to begin with, aiming at forging a bold and truly interdisciplinary path. However, this brought with it the possibility of missing pieces of the puzzle by failing to access information, nuances, informants, or documentation despite having dedicated a disproportionate amount of time and energy to positioning myself in this new context. Second, the study focused on a specific part of Russia, one that is geographically peripheral in relation to international centers of knowledge dissemination on urbanism. Again, this was a conscious choice made in order to bring localized idiosyncrasies in policymaking to the surface. Different results might have emerged had the study included Moscow or had it not been limited to Russia. A third potential limitation is that, with the interviews focused primarily on professional practitioners, voices and perspectives from other fields are missing. There has been an attempt to balance this through highlighting the presence of actors from other fields in the media and in official reporting. A different strategy could have provided additional insights, but it is also possible that other practical challenges would have hindered my ability to produce a sufficiently broad account of the processes.
Finally, this thesis traces an ongoing process. It was therefore difficult to frame it precisely in time, but neither did I seek to, as the process is in any case non-finite. Hence, the results presented here may overlook some nuances and variations. Covering a period of approximately twenty years, the core of the thesis is grounded in empirical data collected in and focused on the 2010s, but events related to each of the three case studies continue to unfold even as I write these words.
4. Cities in Russia and its East

This chapter offers a historical overview of policies for urbanizing eastern Russia, with material drawn from secondary bibliographic sources. The overview begins with the stepwise Russian expansion beyond the Urals and continues to the present state of the territory. As this is a very broad topic, part of which goes beyond the scope of this thesis, the chapter tracks key visions about eastern Russia and its human presence in the form of urban dwelling. This overview precedes the analytical study.

The chapter follows a rough historic periodization: (1) the 16th to late 18th centuries, (2) the first half of the 19th century, (3) the second half of the 19th century to 1917, (4) the period 1917–1947, (5) the post-WWII Soviet state, and (6) contemporary Russia. The main reason for delving into history to this extent is to place the Soviet period of the urbanization of eastern Russia in a broader spatiotemporal perspective. I believe this to be a prerequisite for assessing whether the specific period holds novelty or exceptionality that would, today, justify a mention to its “post-” phase three decades after its formal end. In this endeavor to navigate through time and space, a number of embedded features that remain constant in space and time and are generally considered common ground in relevant studies, both Russian and international, have been identified. These are highlighted and conceptualized in this chapter and will later contribute to the analysis.

4.1. Assertion and modernization

Urban historians have identified a “Russian planning tradition” (French, 1995: 14). The elementary characteristic of early Russian settlements has been that of a hierarchical structure. It appeared early on and remained more or less unaltered for several centuries. By the end of the 17th century, settlements began to be formally designed according to urban planning, which had meanwhile been introduced in Western Russia. These first urban planning acts were ordered by imperial edict (COMMIN, 2006: 27) and resulted in the founding of a large number of towns and cities. Russia’s degree of centralization in this sense stands out in international comparison (French, 1995: 14).
The centralized structure of the state’s control over territorial administration has had an impact on the urbanization of the periphery, including that of the eastern regions: During the conquest of Siberia and the eastward expansion beginning in the late 16th century, the establishment of the first settlements served mainly to secure the southern border. The settlements founded in the course of the 17th century along the main Siberian water arteries were intended to further stepwise eastward expansion until Russia reached the Pacific Ocean in the 18th century. These arteries were the Ob in western Siberia, the Yenisei in eastern central Siberia, and the Lena in the Far East. The settlements built along these rivers and their many tributaries enabled an early grip on the territory. The spatial structure of these settlements followed the earlier fortress-town prototype, which was replicated across the territory. This feature of fast-track urbanization has been highlighted as a main reason behind the relative ease with which vast chunks of land were colonized and absorbed in a relatively short period. At the same time, this rapid arrangement was a first attempt of extraordinary proportions to articulate the large stretches of space into an administered territory. The existing precedent of urban planning was drafted to serve this aim.

This was a lengthy and often disrupted process, as the Russian imperial border was constantly shifting. Between the late 16th and late 19th centuries, the border was reset several times as Russian control expanded towards the steppe, the Caucasus and Central Asia in the south, the polar circle in the north, and the Pacific Ocean in the east. This meant frequent administrative changes and the redrawing of provinces and counties. Recurrent changes disrupted the growth of settlement systems; as a correlate of troop deployment location, the abandonment and destruction of settlements by the military was a common practice in the steppe. As a result, settlement development found firm ground to unfold only much later.

The gradual development of the Siberian Route offered a first opportunity to urbanize the territory. Also known as the Moscow Tract, the Siberian Route was a linear West–East axis that connected Europe to China, providing a northern alternative to the Silk Road. With the axis becoming operational, the thin network of fortifications and outposts such as Irkutsk was gradually integrated, mainly via the tea trade, in the link between China and Moscow reaching to western Europe. As thin as this line was, and as unsurpassable as large parts of the territory remained, this was a significant first step towards the integration of such hubs in transnational functions of that period. It was

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16See also Dahlmann, 2009; Armstrong, 1975.
also a first state-driven attempt to turn the territory into an integrated system with communication lines and rudimentary economic and administrative functions (see Figure 4.2).

Meanwhile, knowledge transfer flourished in the imperial center with Peter the Great’s radical modernization program, a major landmark in the internationalization of Russian urban planning. In Peter’s 1702 invitation to foreigners to work in Russia, modernization and Europeanization became synonymous. Peter also emphasized trips and studies abroad for Russian architects. An iconic part of his endeavor was the city of St. Petersburg itself; built not organically over the course of centuries, as were the cities of western Europe, but in a single burst, St. Petersburg was intended to function as the empire’s gate to Europe and was designed primarily by Italian and French architects. The establishment of the first Building Commission in 1709 turned the city into a large laboratory for planning and architecture that would later radiate knowledge across the empire. Plans for other Russian cities were drafted following the Building Commission’s new principles, and a strict mechanism for control and implementation was introduced.

These policies played out well in the foundation of the first cities in the Urals. In the early 18th century, for example, the area of Yekaterinburg, today the fourth-largest city in Russia, was no more than a loose cluster of buildings lying more than 1500 kilometers east of Moscow. Following the establishment of mining activity in the region, the head of the Ural factories was charged with the study of engineering solutions abroad. His findings were used in the foundation of Yekaterinburg, which was designed to serve simultaneously as factory, city, and fort. A few decades later, this “prototype” of Uralic industrial settlement was prescribed in imperial decrees and transferred almost 2000 kilometers east of Yekaterinburg to the first organized settlements near mining industries in south–central Siberia (see Figure 4.3).

A second wave of westernization reached peripheral Russia during the reign of Catherine II (1762-1796). Strongly influenced by the European Enlightenment, the empress focused on the organization and inner consolidation of the state, including the planning of cities and the management of urban affairs. The master plan prepared by the Building Commission of St. Petersburg became the main urban planning document. Towards the end of Catherine’s reign, plans were drawn for 416 out of a total of 497 cities (COMMIN, 2006: 28), and classicist architectural designs were injected into cities across the empire. With this gesture, Catherine’s “enlightened autocracy” sought to assert itself throughout both the territory and the cities.
Catherine’s era saw the initiation of the economic integration of western and central Siberia, but also the drafting of general plans for cities: Starting with Tyumen (1766), all of the region’s main cities, including Tobolsk (1767), Irkutsk (1768), Krasnoyarsk (1773), and Barnaul (1785) received their first General Plans. Together with these came the introduction of the profession of the city architect and the foundation of regional institutions such as the school for geodesists in Irkutsk (1764). In this way, Siberia and the Far East started growing as parts of a system. However, the pace of this consolidation was slow: Population density in the territory was very low, and settlements remained small and scattered. There was poor awareness among planners in the capital of what was taking place on the periphery. In the absence of resources, skills, and experience on the ground, General Plans were only partially implemented. Beyond a main central complex of monumental buildings, squares, and axes, the remainders of such settlements received little attention (French, 1995: 25). Seemingly out of nowhere, baroque and neoclassicist buildings akin to those of St. Petersburg and Western cities were transplanted into the loosely integrated peripheries of the steppe and the taiga. Autocratic power was thus manifested and stood side by side with rudimentary living arrangements. In this way, the projection of power on the part of the “enlightened autocracy” remained partial and self-referential.

In summary, urban planning theories associated with the European Enlightenment were translated in the territorial periphery as the embodiment of the Russian autocracy. This translation produced sets of oxymora early on: Cities in the east were too sparsely arranged to be within the reach of the state, but they were formed on the basis of command by that same state. While central urban locations offered spots of disproportionate grandeur, compromise was the general rule underlying urban design. As such, grand plans went hand in hand with low expectations on the ground. A feature of double-sidedness began to characterize the way the territory itself was understood as being consolidated into part of the Russian Empire.

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17 The mid-18th century was marked by the foundation and development of many factories and accompanying factory towns beyond Yekaterinburg, notably in Altai. The Kolyvan copper smelter has been suggested as the most characteristic of these cases (Tsaryov et al., 2011).

18 With the establishment of a branch of the Russian Geographical Society a century later, Irkutsk assumed a pioneering role in knowledge production, aiming to support and aid the government through the study of the little-known and remote regions of Siberia and the Far East (Bassin, 1983).
4.2. Unfinished integration

The administrative subdivisions of eastern Russia were stabilized with the establishment of the Western and Eastern Siberian General Governorates in the 1820s and the consolidation of the Far Eastern border in Outer Manchuria in the 1860s. But this avalanche-like spatial expansion from the 17th century onwards did not meet with corresponding demographic growth. As a result, urbanization in the east continued to present a challenge for most of the 19th century, while population density remained negligible even by European Russian standards. The continuous inflow of exiles from European Russia had little effect. In the absence of proper law enforcement in the area, many exiles escaped their makeshift prisons of various sorts and roamed the territory without direction. Any contribution they might have made to the economic development of Siberia was thus negated by very low workforce productivity and the widespread absence of the rule of law across the territory, to which the state responded with additional policing measures. The dispatch of state officials to the distant, cut-off towns did not yield much more than the growth of the state apparatus within them. Introduced in order to police and administer the territory, inside the cities this apparatus was disproportionate to the size of the urban populace. As a result, over the course of two centuries, the early fortresses and garrisons had become administrative outposts and had hosted trade hubs (and, in some cases, small manufacture and industrial units), but their physical appearance had not substantially improved. The spatial change and urban transformation processes that are associated with industrialization and that in European Russia took place in tandem with those in central Europe19 did not reach cities in eastern Russia until much later.

With the increased accessibility of the territory, travelers, explorers, intellectuals, and officials had started formulating a discourse around the East. Articulating in their reports and travelogues the Janus-faced attributes which had developed earlier, they returned to European Russia with a double-faced image of a still unknown elsewhere that awaited discovery, human activity and habitation, development, and integration.

The first feature of this contradictory image was that of opportunity and freedom. It was already taking shape during the initial phases of exploration and colonization in the 16th–18th centuries, embodied by the adventurers and

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19 These processes differed in Russia, however, including an extensive rural–urban seasonal movement of workers, the common lack of permanence in urban settling, weak tax bases, and the belated local autonomy and fiscal responsibility of cities (Rowland, 1976).
the traders who roamed the East gathering fur in the hopes of enrichment, but also by small groups of peasant populations fleeing European Russia to establish their own communities in the depths of Siberia. The territory’s image was also supported by the general absence of serfdom, in contrast to the circumstances in European Russia. In the 19th century, with a very small human imprint, Siberia and the Far East were still largely open to any kind of vision. Accordingly, the overwhelmingly large land awaited cultivation and hoped to be able to welcome fishing and hunting activities. The discovery of large mineral reserves also revealed the potential for industrial development and stimulated visions of not only a self-sustained Siberia, but a bountiful one. The idea of the Russian Empire’s eastern “frontier” was articulated and popularized (Panarina, 2013). Indeed, romanticized reports of the nature, landscapes, and peoples of Siberia appeared in the writings of occasional visitors, explorers, and artists.

The second feature of the East was that of punishment and exile. As early as the late 16th century, the Russian state had adopted a policy of exiling undesirable elements to its eastern periphery, which gradually acquired a special place in the collective imagination. In 1753, under Empress Elisabeth, the Petrine ritual of “civic execution,” whereby those guilty of capital crimes were stripped of juridical rights and titles, was replaced with penal labor in Siberia (Beer, 2016: 16). In this expression of autocratic might, the territory became synonymous not only with an elsewhere but with disappearance and banishment: Political death and eternal penal labor. Hence an unsurpassable mental barrier was firmly fixed upon the Urals: With hundreds of thousands of exiles having passed through Siberia by the first half of the 19th century, the popular understanding of anything lying beyond that barrier was that of a penal colony: A prison without a roof, a dumping ground for outlaws of all sorts. Despite being only a half-truth, this image was so powerful that, by the mid-19th century, the positive features of this elsewhere had dissipated in the domestic discourse. From a place of limitless potential, Siberia came to be perceived as an impossible endeavor, a primitive, useless region lacking any relation to Western-style development, a completely isolated stretch of territory (Bassin, 1991: 771). Additionally, although most cities in Siberia had acquired regular planning structures with the 1832 Building Charter, the executive bodies, skills, and resources there had remained scarce, inadequate, or disrupted by the great distances. Stationed officials portrayed the region in mixed modes, struck by the sharp contrast between the vastness of the

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20 For more general discussions, see Grant, 1991; Pallot and Shaw, 1990.
territory and the minimal human presence. Their impressions of cities were rather negative; they were seen as dirty, with poorly maintained wooden houses (Tsaryov et al., 2011: 223–224). Town and rural dwellers were described in an “either-or” way: Either as respectable, orderly citizens or as bandits living in shanty conditions. Regardless, they were considered “unable to significantly contribute to the improvement of the cities they inhabit nor have they the incentives” (Hagemeister, in Tsaryov et al., 2011: 229). That included the absence of the notion of permanence, as many inhabitants were seasonally stationed officials who had no personal stake in the urban economy or in the appearance of cities. Others were former Cossacks from the south of European Russia who had kept their rather non-urban lifestyles. In many literary and scientific works of the period, Siberians were looked down upon by their contemporaries in St. Petersburg.

It was the exiled Decembrists who made an unexpected, unintended bottom-up contribution to the region’s lagging development. The military officer revolutionaries of 1825, many of whom were initially sent to the Nerchinsk mining fields at the eastern end of Siberia, formed a small but influential force for civic change in the subsequent years. For the first time, Siberia’s reputation passed from total obscurity to that of a terrain contributing to Russian political history. With Nicholas the First’s autocracy sweeping across the Empire, the 1830s saw parts of Siberia, such as Chita and Irkutsk, quietly accommodating the visions of Russian republicanism. This was reflected in civic life and urbanization. Having been freed from the formalities and constraints of life in Petersburg, and after serving a few years in penal mining colonies, the Decembrists saw their new homes in a positive light and actively transplanted aspects of metropolitan social and cultural life into their eastern settlements. Many of the Decembrists dispersed across Siberia after they had served their sentences, and their integration was overwhelmingly positive. The flourishing of cultural life, education, and science in cities such as Irkutsk, Chita, Krasnoyarsk, and Minusinsk in the second half of the 19th century has been generally attributed to their actions. However minor or unconscious, this bottom-up attempt brought together the two contradictory features of the eastern periphery; this helped to create specific civic places within the still unknown elsewhere, adding several mythical attributes to its collective understanding back in European Russia.
4.3. Reforms and globalization

The second half of the 19th century was marked by Alexander the Second’s (1855–1881) Great Reforms and the radical transformation of Russian cities.21 In the European part of the Empire, the emancipation of serfs resulted in a large rural–urban influx. Freed serfs also settled in parts of rural Siberia, but less so in cities. At the same time, the imperial expansion towards the east reached its southernmost point with the founding of Vladivostok. However, the attempt to consolidate Siberia and the Far East remained incomplete. The majority of designated towns remained essentially clusters of a few houses dispersed in a terrain about whose uses Petersburg chronically lacked updated information.22 Cities still had no complex socioeconomic layering, and they lacked the skilled personnel and resources to implement the urban planning prescriptions arriving from the imperial center. For example, even Novonikolaevsk (present-day Novosibirsk), then the fastest growing city in Siberia, had no appointed architect or construction engineer (Tsaryov et al., 2011: 530).

A decisive solution to this lag came in the form of the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway, which replaced the Siberian Route, between 1891 and 1903. The main imperial goal was to finally stabilize communications across the latitudinal axis, reach the heart of Asia, and interlink the territories. Especially in terms of the east, the goal was to solve the persistent problem of territorial consolidation, opening up space for the development of the regions and accessing their natural resources (see Figure 4.4). The construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway was essentially a top-down undertaking that paved the way for the transnational integration of eastern Russia, with a twofold impact in cities. First, urban growth began to flourish. With the inauguration of the railway, several cities were lifted from obscurity and appeared on the world map. The movement of people was facilitated, as was West–East migration. Cities such as Omsk, Novosibirsk, further out to Irkutsk, and, still further, Khabarovsk, gradually developed stronger links to each other and to European Russia. Within a few years, those cities saw an increase in economic and industrial output; the expansion of educational, civic, and cultural institutions; private wealth accumulation; urban entrepreneurship; and demo—

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21 These acts liberated roughly 40 percent of the population from bondage, created an independent judicial system, introduced self-governing councils in towns and rural areas, eased censorship, transformed military service, strengthened banking, and granted more autonomy to universities. See also Gleason, 1976.

22 In her memoirs, Princess Volkonskaya mentions a prison commander in Chita who invented mining tasks for the convicts: The Imperial government was not aware that there were no mines in the area it had exiled them (Volkonskaya 1903: 69).
graphic growth. Second, knowledge transfer also began to flourish. The main knowledge hub in Siberia, starting at the turn of the 19th century and continuing for many decades to come, became the city of Tomsk, home of Tomsk University and the Tomsk Institute of Technology. The railway construction process included complex projects such as state-of-the-art steel bridges and paved the way for the introduction of electricity and sewage systems in cities. The arrival of an engineering intelligentsia that travelled for the purposes of the project also had a positive impact (Tsarev et al., 2011: 255). To these were added skilled migrants from European Russia, who could now travel much more easily. In the field of civil engineering, more varied solutions in architectural forms appeared along with the diversification of the profession, a shift from a primarily military focus to a civil one and the foundation of educational institutions for the study of engineering. A network of architects, engineers, and craftsmen was now operative in the cities along the way from Petersburg to Vladivostok. It is in this context that urban development plans became increasingly sophisticated, seeking to give cities “a more contemporary, European look” (Tsaryov et al., 2011: 246–248).

In general, by the end of the 19th century, Russia as a whole achieved high rates of industrialization and improvements on socioeconomic indicators. Despite regional shortcomings, by the early 20th century, eastern Russia as a whole was integrating into the Empire as well. This was partly due to the abovementioned breakthroughs in transportation infrastructure, but it also resulted from the agrarian reforms introduced after the 1905 revolution. With regard to Siberia, the Stolypin reforms encouraged eastward settlement and resulted in the voluntary movement of several million people beyond the Urals over a period of only a few years. By 1917, Siberia itself had become the most popular destination in the empire for migrants (Hill and Gaddy, 2003: 72–100). The narrative of ambiguity gradually weakened and development seemed to be bearing fruit, with the empire having gained a solid grip over a quickly developing territory whose cities were transforming into contemporary, industrializing regional hubs at a rapid pace.

That period, together with intense discussions over Russian national identity and an increase in political tensions, also saw the rise of a dynamic, porous relation to international urban planning practices. Specialized journals such as Gorodskoe Delo (Urban Affairs) began to be published. The

23 The universities of Tomsk still have fine reputations and score high in Russian academic rankings.
24 For example, the Krasnoyarsk railway bridge over Yenisei received an award at the 1900 Paris World Fair.
Garden City movement reached Russia, and a Russian Garden City Society was founded. Interestingly, a Siberian branch of the Society was also instituted in the city of Barnaul. This flourishing of ideas yielded few projects that materialized before the outbreak of the Civil War, but it had a lasting impact on Soviet urban planning and design.25

4.4. Endless disruption

During the turbulent times between World War I and the late 1940s, the urban centers of Siberia and the Far East saw the return and interplay of attributes that had seemed to dissipate at the turn of the century. These were the contradictory birth of wild visions and the forceful crushing of hopes, accompanied by the state’s massive attempts to advance territorial development.

To begin with, the brutal civil war that took place between 1917 and 1922/23 resulted in the disruption of all forms of civic life and the large-scale abandonment of many cities, with many urban dwellers retreating to rural lands. Almost all previous land use and planning practices were abolished by the 1917 Decree on Land, the 1918 Decree on Private Property in Cities (COMMIN, 2006: 29) and War Communism policies, which were in place until 1921. The great geographical distance from the main centers of political power did not spare the East; on the contrary, with much of the White movement’s activity based in Siberia, Russia’s east suffered severe consequences, with sparse enclaves remaining contested in the early 1920s.27

The intention to subjugate Siberia in order to extract resources was prioritized by the new regime even before the total consolidation of Soviet power.28 A special Interdepartmental Commission of the Siberian Revolutionary Committee (SIBREVKOM) was established for that purpose in 1920 and operated during the transitional period of Lenin’s New Economic Policy (NEP). The territorial subdivisions established by the early Soviet regime did not diverge significantly from the borders of the 19th-century Siberian gover-
norates. The ensuing NEP prioritized agricultural rather than urban economic growth and, until its abolition in 1928, cities slowly began to recover. Siberia-based research called for policies that would improve the quality of life in cities, encouraging residents to become permanent urban dwellers rather than temporarily stationed settlers. Such voices were generally ignored.29 In general, the new rulers appeared puzzled by the typical Siberian city, which was “quite unattractive, muddy, badly built up with isolated stone buildings […] probably all those Klondikes originally looked like that” (Nevzgodin, 2005). These were the thoughts of the People’s Commissar of Education upon his visit to Novonikolaevsk,30 but they could equally have been those of a 19th-century governor upon arrival at his new post.

Meanwhile, in Moscow and Petersburg, theorizing on cities and architecture had reached unforeseen qualitative heights. For a moment in time, the early Soviet avant-garde stood at the epicenter of the international discourse and attracted the attention of some of the most influential figures of the 20th century. The uninhibited exchange of ideas between Soviet urbanists and theorists abroad was, however, short-lived and came to an end with Stalin’s Great Break and the core diktat of modernization through industrialization. For that, urbanization was assigned a significant role,31 and the features of the new, non-capitalist city were prescribed accordingly in the first five-year plan of 1928.

This went hand in hand with the increased centralization of the Soviet urban system: While the Russian Empire had before 1917 boasted two equally large capital cities and several highly developed secondary cities in the west, Moscow was designated the economic, political, and cultural center of the USSR in the 1930s. The capital became host to an expanding state apparatus which commanded planning, production, and resource distribution in the Soviet Union. Even St. Petersburg, now renamed Leningrad, was gradually stripped of urban planning research institutes; these were transferred to Moscow. It comes as no surprise, then, that the most important urban planning document of the period was the 1935 General Plan for Moscow,32 which

29 As in the case of a rejected report on Siberia’s development perspectives, submitted by a university professor at Tomsk (Tsaryov et al., 2011: 556).
30 The name of Novosibirsk until 1926.
31 Stalin’s “Год великого перелома” (1929). Retrieved from: https://www.marxists.org/russkij/stalin/t12/t12_06.htm
32 The main principles were: (1) controlled city size, (2) state control of housing and living space provision per person, (3) development of residential areas planned from the level of the housing quarter to that of the individual building, (4) spatial equality in distribution of items for collective consumption, goods, and services, (5) limited journeys to work, (6) stringent land-use zoning, (7) rationalized traffic flow, (8) extensive green spaces, (9) symbolic functions of the city center to
functioned as a reference point for plans in other cities. Accordingly, the GIPROGOR and GORSTROIPROEKT institutes drafted the first general plans for Siberian and Far Eastern cities in the early 1930s. Several of these plans echoed earlier, revolutionary urbanist visions and even involved the continuation of the international knowledge transfer that had begun in the 1920s. The imprint of this vanguard knowledge transfer in Siberia was clearer in the miners’ sotsgorods in the Kuzbass Basin.

Under Stalin, Siberia was reconceptualized as a territory that would make the USSR self-sufficient in strategic resources. With this goal, a series of policies was launched that sought to accelerate both industrialization and urbanization amidst one of the highest rates of urbanization in world history. These projects were on a scale far beyond any previous planning policies. Envisioning the functional linkage of huge territorial entities larger than sizable European countries, they turned into Sisyphean processes that stretched human limits and eventually distorted the settlement system in the name of uniform development and population distribution across the territory. Such were the initiation of the Angara–Yenisei project in central Siberia and the joint project for metallurgy in the Urals and mining in Kuznetsk. In the Far East, the Baikal–Amur Mainline (BAM) railway project was launched. These policies were implemented concurrently with dekulakization, forced collectivization, the Stalinist purges, and the expansion of penal settlements that often grew into proper cities. Projects such as the BAM were possible largely due to the enormous amounts of labor provided by the easternmost outposts of the GULAG system.

reflect the greatness of the Soviet state, and (10) planning that would discourage a high concentration of industries in large cities (see also Bater, 1980).

33 These visions had advocated complete social reconstruction, to be achieved either through the establishment of a system of self-contained urban centers with dense housing and communal living or an essentially townless society via the dispersal of population into individual dwellings in natural surroundings connected to communal centers.

34 Sotsgorods (socialist cities) were residential quarters built during the 1930s on the basis of earlier radical approaches to urban dwelling.

35 Such was the plan for the territorial organization of the Kuznetsk basin in western Siberia, by Promstroiproekt (Промстройпроект). The latter was founded in 1930 and was until 1991 GOSTROY’s main design institute for industrial construction. See http://www.pspm.ru/company/

36 This remains imprinted into the spatial structure of cities, such as Angarsk, founded in 1948 in the north of Irkutsk (“Angarsk: Jüngste…”, 1957).

37 The government agency in charge of the system of forced labor camps was established under Lenin and reached its peak during Stalin’s rule. It was essentially the most significant instrument of political repression in the Soviet Union. I use the term GULAG broadly to refer to the system of concentration camps, forced labor camps, prisons, colonies, and settlements.
The onset of World War II triggered the deportation of millions from the west and fed the expansion of the penal system in the east. Similarly, the outbreak of the war resulted in a boost in the development of Siberian cities due to the emergency dismantling of and evacuation from the war theater of entire industrial enterprises, together with workers and their families, eastwards. In an ironic twist, the colossal war damage inflicted upon the western part of the USSR boosted growth in its east. With cities such as Leningrad under siege and Volgograd and Minsk leveled by the German army, Uralic and Siberian cities such as Perm, Omsk, Novosibirsk, and Krasnoyarsk continued to grow unabated. At the end of World War II, those cities had the advantages of large, operational industrial complexes and skilled labor. Early postwar development plans for Siberia and the Far East sought to capitalize on this in addition to the fast industrialization, the mass fabrication in construction that was only beginning to burgeon, and a policy mechanism populated by an expanding bureaucracy.

4.5. Endless planning

The second half of the 20th century saw increased centralization of planning, standardization of design, and industrialization of construction; however, skepticism about their effects was also growing. It is interesting to note that the mechanism of imperial control of urban policies not only survived the three decades of the Civil War, Stalinist purges, and World War II, but returned in full force in the postwar Soviet city. As with the city plans of Catherine’s era, General Plans in the Soviet era were prepared from afar; actors located in the various territorial elsewheres of the state had limited opportunity to develop agency. Urban centers developed accordingly, as hubs of a system that launched gigantic developmental plans. As before, these attempts consumed amounts of resources that were disproportionate to the final outcomes. Thus, 20th-century policies did not manage to cut through the territory’s mythical double-faced obscurity.

In the field of policymaking, the Communist Party and its congress and committees consolidated total control over the state. GOSPLAN, the State Planning Committee, played the principal role in central economic planning. A complex of ministries, departments, and enterprises were involved in capital construction, led by the State Committee for Construction (GOSTROY), which was formed in 1950. GOSPLAN, however, proved unable to align regional and territorial planning with industrial development. Economic planners prioritized industrial branch interests and remained largely ignor-
ant regarding regional economies. Branch administrators were no better informed about the regions. Ministerial decision-makers and their interest in appearing successful to the Party took precedence over regional needs (Baron, 2004: 441). Subsidiary industrial and production associations, enterprises, and, eventually, state mechanisms were all subordinate to networks of dependencies and lobbying. Reforms introduced in the late 1950s sought to curtail ministerial control and favor municipal power,38 but they instead resulted in more compartmentalized decision-making. A few years later, the ministerial system returned, as strong as ever (Frolic 1971, 1972). The consistency of Soviet political regulation rested on the ability of the political center to distribute and redistribute resources. From there, the interest groups and lobbies which were strategically better positioned or tactically more effective succeeded in obtaining subsidies and preferential treatment (Segbers, 2001).

The buildup of this system had an obvious impact on urban planning. With industrial branch interests setting the tone, regional cities became neutralized parts of a system built on lobbying mechanisms in which local actors had little scope to design their cities; architectural and planning authorities could do little more than seek political support and compromise in order to influence planning (Bater, 1980: 50). Even central authorities repeatedly failed to achieve development objectives at the city level. Because central planners took so long to draft plans that were obsolete by the time they were finished, General Plans were also gradually discredited (Hamm, 1977: 68). The appearance of professional municipal officials and skilled planners in the late 1970s, as well as reforms in support of local Soviets in the early 1980s (Shaw, 1985: 412), gave birth to new hopes which again faded with perestroika.

In the field of construction, a qualitative and quantitative breakthrough took place in the mid- to late 1950s39 with the initiation of the large-scale state program for the provision of free housing to all Soviet citizens. The wide-

38 Khrushchev introduced the Regional Economic Soviets (SovNarKhoz) and favored the role of the Executive Committees of City Soviets with his “territorial principle” policy. горисполком – исполнительный комитет городского Совета народных депутатов; City Executive Committee – Executive Committee of the City Council of People’s Deputies was one of the many executive committees created at various levels of administration. After August 1991, executive committees were abolished and replaced by administrations.


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spread application of standardization and prefabrication rendered housing essentially an industrial product. The subsequent acceleration of construction culminated in the “characteristic” Soviet city with its egalitarian design, spacious green and recreational spaces, and identical housing blocks in identical residential quarters, following the achievement of an impressive volume of housing production in hundreds of cities. This was made possible with the production of a large body of scientific research, with normative documents prescribing all aspects of construction and guidelines for practically everything, from the design of small articles of urban furniture to the distribution of social services in residential quarters. Architectural design was also approached accordingly: While the Soviet expert community remained up to date with the international discourse, a distinctive feature of Soviet architecture was the customization of ideas into scalable and easily replicable solutions across the territory.

To the east, early post-war developmental policies sought further territorial integration. These were epitomized in 1947 in the scientific concept of the Territorial-Production Complex (TPC). With the adoption of the TPC concept, a rational spatial–economic analysis was introduced and groups of interrelated economic activities were arranged based on the availability of raw materials and energy. The TPC became a landmark for postwar Soviet locational, planning, and growth policies. Ministries and industrial managerial officials assigned specific profiles to urban settlements, largely defining their growth and setting the frame for the foundation of numerous monofunctional cities. Research and design of such new towns on the basis of TPC planning was conducted by Moscow- and Leningrad-
based institutes such as GIPROGOR and the Central Research and Design Institute for Urban Planning. These drafts resembled some circulating in contemporary international discourse, such as the New Towns in Britain. The Soviet institutes, though, drafted rather maximalist plans. With the industrialization of construction, many limitations were lifted, and mass-fabricated residential districts and new towns appeared in formerly empty stretches of Eurasia.

With the gradual subsiding of forced relocations after the death of Stalin in 1953, populating the territory was attempted by means of other policies, including increased material compensation and the use of ideological mechanisms. Such was the “Virgin Lands” campaign, an ambitious project for boosting agricultural production by opening up extensive lands for cultivation from the Volga River, Northern Kazakhstan and Western Siberia, to the Altai region and the Yenisei River and parts of the Far East. Large numbers of youth volunteers and professionals were mobilized during the 1950s and expected to settle in the arid steppe. That campaign was, however, unsuccessful and was abandoned a few years later.

Optimism about the complete integration of Siberia and the Far East was also clear in policies for advancing regional scientific clusters. In the early 1960s, the inauguration of the Akademgorodok in Novosibirsk – the first in a series of autonomous scientific centers in Siberia – represented the peak of hopes for creating a decentralized network of scientific innovation clusters. Elsewhere, planners drafted bold visions for optimal, technologically advanced habitation in the North or for the interconnection of Eurasia with linear settlements reminiscent of early Soviet utopian visions.

As a result of technological improvements, increased pace of urbanization, and the expansion of transportation infrastructure, western Siberia had by the 1980s become the largest energy-producing region in the USSR, and five of the Soviet Union’s twelve TPCs were located in Siberia and the Far East (see Figure 4.5). Siberia’s principal cities had been raised from insignificance to industrial, military, and resource extraction powerhouses. Western observers were puzzled by the scale of further planned investments across Eurasia (Hill and Gaddy, 2003), emphasizing their dubious feasibility (Hausladen, 1990a, b; Josephson, 1995) and the great strains that expansion would place on transportation infrastructure (Shaw et al., 1995: 75). Further

45 The Bratsk–Ust–Ilim, the West Siberian, the Kansk–Achinsk, the Sayansk, and the South Yakutian. Three TPCs were located in the southern steppes and central Asia (Orenburg, Pavlodar–Ekibastuz, Karatau–Dzhambulsk, and South Tajik), one in the Russian North (Timan–Pechora), and two in European Russia and the Caucasus (Kursk and Mangyshlak).
to the east, the endeavor of the BAM railway was finalized with the help of thousands of Communist Youth volunteers who were expected to settle there; however, most of them did not do so. As with the Virgin Lands campaign three decades earlier, voluntary relocation was only temporary. Again, the project’s completion was only possible through the consumption of extensive human and material resources. It was the swan song of large-scale Soviet territorial planning.

Under the last Secretary General of the Communist Party, Mikhail Gorbachev, growth-oriented acceleration halted; “the problem was seen to be Siberia itself, as well as the efforts to develop it,” and the idea that eastern Russia would register “self-sustained growth in this century” was soon abandoned (Hill and Gaddy, 2003: 72–100). Indeed, and as in previous moments, the late 20th-century attempts to develop eastern Russia had consumed plans, visions, and resources only to produce disproportionately poor results.

4.6. From urbanization to urbanism

During the 1990s, Soviet urban and regional planning atrophied and, with the dissolution of the USSR, the mechanism of normative standards became a liability and was eventually paralyzed. Research and design institutions weakened or were closed as a result of the exodus of scientific personnel in the early 1990s. At the local government level, the demoralization of the now low-paid personnel was combined with the proliferation of poorly designed private projects. It was under these conditions that the first seeds of knowledge transfer in a post-Soviet, transitional institutional environment were planted.

The first steps taken to match Russian practice with international practice benefited Moscow and St. Petersburg, where foreign consultants were generally based. While the first Federal Codex (1998) failed to respond to the landscape of actors and market needs, the second attempt brought American zoning principles to dozens of cities that were later integrated into the 2004 Federal Codex (COMMIN, 2006: 59). With that, Russia acquired a transitional hybrid system that combined the institutional traditions of Soviet planning, bureaucratic centralization, and U.S. zoning (Golubchikov, 2004: 243). European competence also arrived via the AEECAU (Association Européenne d’Étude et de Coopération en Aménagement et Urbanisme) and the Committee on Spatial Development in the Baltic Sea Region (COMMIN, —

46 The abolition of government pricing for design sharply reduced design quality: The tender now could be won by the project organization, and cheaper construction yielded lower quality (Interviews 28, 31).
Knowledge transfer became area-based, largely benefiting the cities and regions that participated in joint cross-border programs within European Union frameworks such as the ERDF and INTERREG. This benefited mainly St. Petersburg and parts of the Northwestern Federal District.

Similarly area-based success took place in the field of ideas, with Moscow at the epicenter. While it was turning into an economic hub with considerable international outreach in the 2000s, the country’s capital also attracted significant investments that boosted its intellectual and creative capital and earned it a place in the international urbanist discourse. Examples include the establishment of academic programs in urban studies and of the Strelka Institute for Media, Architecture, and Design. Established in 2009 as a private, non-profit avant-garde research hub with superstar architect Rem Koolhaas as its first program director, Strelka sought to position Moscow on the global map of urbanism and design: Soon, Strelka’s publications began to demonstrate a previously unseen dynamism and positivity as well as a thirst to acquire and apply expertise and to import best practices from abroad (see Strelka, 2016). The Moscow Urban Forum, too, a large annual event, was intended to become a stage for dialogue among Russian and international experts.

Indeed, Moscow made a decisive turn towards urbanism in the second half of the 2010s with the launch of an extensive municipal program coordinated by the Strelka Institute (see Ch.1.1) in addition to extensive investments in infrastructure. This anticipated hitherto unseen improvements in everyday life and was advertised as “the most comprehensive urban revitalization program in the city’s recent history” (Minstroy, 2016). The process culminated in the establishment of Zaradyie, a large park facing the Kremlin in the heart of the city, signed by the starchitects who had designed New York’s iconic High Line a few years earlier. Starting in 2016, unprecedented resources were poured into urban renewal and repair works that sought to

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47 Characteristic of this was Moscow Mayor Luzhkov’s announcement, on the occasion of the city’s 850th anniversary, of the transformation of Moscow into a “civilized world capital,” echoing the earlier Soviet imperative to turn Moscow into a glorious socialist metropolis (Pagonis and Thornley, 2000).

48 As, for example, in Büdenbender and Zupan, 2016; Grant, 2001; O’Loughlin and Kolossov, 2002.

49 Full name: Charitable Foundation for the Support of Education and Research in the Media, Architecture, and Design.

50 For example, a total makeover of its transport system. See https://www.ebrdgreencities.com/policy-tool/shifting-from-transport-to-mobility-moscow-russia-2/

51 “Starchitect” (a shortened form of “star architect”) is a colloquial expression used to refer to architects with celebrity status who deliver iconic international designs.
match the materialities of Moscow’s public spaces with those of an up-to-date global city, making them green, bike-friendly, and pedestrian-friendly. This extensive, all-encompassing program offered tangible proof that Russia’s capital had entered the club of world cities – not only in terms of abstract economic ratings, but also in terms of a visibly improved urban life with public spaces that adhered to current urbanism and landscape design trends (see Figure 4.1).

In the same period, the urban and regional development trajectory in eastern Russia had been quite different and internally divergent. After the dissolution of the Soviet system, endowed regions sought to push forward while others stagnated or sank into crisis and sought handouts. The active insurgency in Chechnya aside, the young Russian Federation faced regional unevenness and challenges of many kinds, in Siberia and the east as well, ranging from labor unrest in Kuzbass to serious considerations of autonomy among Yakut and other regional elites. A compromise was reached with elites “getting integrated in a clientelistic relationship to the federal state. Networks of wealth were established to connect Siberian resources to the global economy via Moscow-based conglomerates” (Castells et al., 2000: 195). The center–periphery relation became embedded in the vertical organization of government and administration and in the highly concentrated structure of the economy that followed. Indeed, almost half of all federal tax revenue today is concentrated in Moscow and a few resource-rich regions (Zubarevich, 2016, 2019). Against a background of networking, lobbying, privatization, and the merging of enterprises, elite regional actors began to amass disproportionate wealth and became highly mobile. State profits were directed to the federal center, private profits were funneled into offshore bank accounts, and none of the key actors resided in Siberia or, for that matter, anywhere in Russia. The state managed to achieve a grip on the territory of eastern Russia only at the turn of the century.

52 The case of the Siberian Agreement (Hughes, 1994). See also Kempton, 1996; Seliverstov, 2014; Stavrakis et al., 1997.
In the process of power consolidation at the federal and transnational level, the material outlook of cities contained in this territorial elsewhere was not prioritized, and the developmental lag continued. With Moscow rising as a global city offering a full range of opportunities to the country’s talent, regional centers were drained of creative forces and knowledge-intensive capital. The relevant institutional infrastructure lacked the critical mass necessary to generate and sustain local problematizing. This lag appeared even in the largest regional cities, where urban policy frameworks, sealed off from the international discourse, remained trapped in inertia for much of the 2000s. Large Siberian and Far Eastern cities were underfunded, while small industrial cities, towns, and rural localities suffered even more. The inherited Soviet practice of setting large-scale economic goals was perpetuated, leaving

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53 Works such as that of Glazychev (2005) demonstrate the availability, early in the 2000s, of contextual, place-specific insights on the question of urbanity in association with civic identity in small-town Russia, at least among cultural theorists and urban sociologists. My argument is that this knowledge had scarcely been crystallized into policy even well into the 2010s. Iyer (2003) provides a topical example of policy formation in Siberia, starting off pondering whether adjustments in the planning process in the periphery would trickle down from Moscow or whether a regional variation would emerge from place-specific dynamics (Iyer, 2003: 204).
the details of consequent physical and social patterns for architects and city planners to manage later on (Ruble, 1995: 120). It is perhaps this grim reality, in addition to the climatological characteristics of Siberia, that brought the authors of a Brookings Report (see also Ch. 1.4) to suggest nothing less than the almost complete depopulation of Russia beyond the Urals. According to the report, any policy for urbanization and development was a resource-wasting endeavor destined to fail in all aspects, social, ecological, and economic. However blunt, such an assessment does nothing more than echo early 19th-century perceptions of Siberia as a useless, primitive, isolated territory, now infused with early 21st-century environmentalism.

In reality, following accession to the World Trade Organization in 2012 and a series of other events, Russia had appeared to be on its way to integrating into the global economy. The ample opportunities for its large economy to attract FDI and multinational enterprises signaled both internationalization and the repairing of interregional developmental gaps (Iwasaki and Suganuma, 2015). Indeed, the Russian government sought to address regional development on several occasions and utilizing a variety of tools. Doing so included balancing the urban development question (Lappo and Lyubovnyi, 2011). After several years of indecisiveness over whether a growth pole policy or one promoting the reduction of interregional disparities would be most appropriate, Russian regional development policymaking entered the 2010s aiming at polarized growth, attempting to attract human capital to urban agglomerations in order to kick-start a knowledge economy (Kinossian, 2013: 612, 617, 621) and social modernization. By asserting this causal link, the official federal policy was actively aligning itself with international urbanistic discourses, although this was not explicitly stated.

4.7. Eastern Russia as a peculiar terrain

From the 16th century onwards and registering a peak in the 20th century, the territory in question has been subject to policies encouraging its proper integration into the Russian state in its various forms. The establishment of cities has been instrumental in this process. The notion of urbanization in eastern Russia should be understood as a process of creating exploratory, military, administrative, trade, and industrial outposts, in this chronological order, according to the interests and plans of the Russian state over time. Drawing a rough chronological scheme, one could say that they were founded as military stations in the 17th century, with a layer of administrative functions added in the 18th century. This was followed by economic com-
plexity and densification of civil institutions in the late 19th century. For the most part, the 20th century saw processes of extensive industrialization overwhelming the above functions.

Regarding the problematizing of the urban form in eastern Russia, the condensed periodization offered in this chapter has argued that the neutralization of processes of local ideation was the result of a prolonged absence of civic agency, market economy, and institutional complexity that continued in the Soviet period. This entailed the prioritization of industrial development and the creation of a complex system of decision-making, resource allocation, and production and dissemination of knowledge, including guidelines about what, where, and how to build. With chronic gaps at the lower ends of this mechanism, the process of problematizing on the urban form has historically been the domain of center-oriented state mechanisms, while the implementation of the resulting policies is structurally associated with an embedded, stubborn lag of executive capacities in these cities. This marks a peculiar feat in the historical articulation of the territory, whereby ambitious state programs are launched in successive waves in time and space, allowing glimpses of agency, initiative, and promising outcomes running parallel to repression and coercion and, eventually, failing to achieve completion. This condition survived the dissolution of the Soviet Union and appears very consistent in the most recent urbanistic discourse, which has been articulated, within a few years, into a centrally coordinated structure.

This observation, of course, applies to regional centers across the country. What remains specific to cities in the area extending to and beyond the Urals (see Figure 4.6) is the embeddedness of two additional features. First is the persistence of an ambiguity resembling the myth of Janus, whereby the territory is a container of both the best and the worst possible outcomes: Both the bold visions about becoming the land of abundance and their hopeless dismissal; both a heroic Neverland for the brightest Soviet youth volunteers and an open-air prison for the enemies of the people; from envisioning the wildest urban planning utopias for socialist mankind to mechanically assembling cheap prefab housing. Second, the periodization offered in this chapter suggests a history of seemingly perpetually unfinished policies for integrating an extended territory in the East, resembling the myth of Sisyphus: Reappearing in waves in space and time, irrespective of administrations and regimes, employing different actors and mobilizing different resources but only occasionally and partially reaching completion, only to dissolve into the territory with accompanying exhaustion, mismanagement, or plundering of material and human resources. These features are strong
and consistent. Do they matter in the current, ongoing quest for urbanism? I believe that they do, and I use them to inform the analysis on urban policy in the subsequent chapters.
Figure 4.2. Russia’s eastward expansion from the late 16th to the late 18th century. (Drawn by author)
Figure 4.3. Early application of urban planning principles beyond the Urals in association to the opening of mining fields and industrialization. (Drawn by author)
Figure 4.4. The Trans-Siberian railway system. Highlighted are the main cities along it. (Drawn by author)
Figure 4.5. Location of operating and planned TPCs in Siberia before perestroika. (Adapted from de Souza, 1989: 116)
Figure 4.6. The persisting Europe–Asia divide. Two federal programs that strongly impacted urban policies of the 2010s. (Drawn by author)
5. Urban policy: Boosting convergence

This chapter covers the first case of translation of a process for urban renewal in peripheral Russia, that of mega-event boosterism. It demonstrates how translation has been driven by a state-defined quest for internationalization. The analysis frames the mega-event as a process that predominantly addressed questions of agglomeration development and was less focused on urban policy. The analysis is guided by the research questions posed in the introductory chapter regarding (a) the moments of normative change in addressing urban development; (b) the actor landscape; (c) the resources allocated to city improvement; and (d) the physical output of recent years’ changing urban policies.

As noted in Chapter 2, the holding of mega-events has offered a convenient policy tool as part of the entrepreneurial turn in urbanism in recent decades. Especially in developing countries, mega-events have been instrumentalized by political and economic elites and turned into opportunities for boosting the host cities, pushing them into what is perceived as inter-urban competition for attracting increasingly mobile global capital. The term “spectacular urbanization” has recently been coined in relevant studies (Koch and Valiyev, 2015; see also Chapter 2.4.1), summarizing the process into which mega-event boosterism is translated. This chapter adopts and expands upon the term.

On several occasions in the early 21st century, the Russian state has used mega-events to its advantage, seeing in them an opportunity to trigger the internationalization, infrastructural modernization, and economic development of certain agglomerations. Here, the focus is on policies associated with an international summit that took place in 2012 in the Russian Far East. While not a mega-event in the strict sense of the term, the summit was approached as such and had an impact of equivalent magnitude. As the first such event in the recent history of eastern Russia, it was emblematic of the state’s attempt to enhance the interregional profile of the Russian Far East. The setting of the event was Vladivostok, a port city with a distinct geographical positioning. The analysis frames associated events and the recent evolution of a problematizing of the urban condition in this city as a process
5.1. Context

5.1.1. Introducing the case

The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Forum was established in 1989 and is the largest regional organization in the Asia-Pacific region (APR). APEC pursues the goal of regional integration, including through annual summits. Key priorities for APEC are to expand the process of liberalization of regional trade and investment and to promote further structural economic reforms in member countries. From the Russian perspective, active participation in APEC creates opportunities to attract investment and advanced technologies, in particular to the economic space of Siberia and the Far East, as well as Russian goods’ access to APR markets (Mosolova, 2014).

The subsequent organization of a successful summit in the capital of Primorsky formally signaled the beginnings of the global integration of the entire Russian Far East. But the stakes were set quite high: The previous year’s summit had been held in Hawaii. Cities such as Shanghai, Bangkok, Sydney, Singapore, and Yokohama figured among past summit hosts. By contrast, Vladivostok was a stagnant city undergoing depopulation. At the regional level, the prolonged self-isolation of the Soviet period had yielded a somewhat lawless city running on a booming black economy. But precisely that city was expected to host an event promoting the development of mutually beneficial trade and economic ties with APR countries. This was one of the key foreign economic policy priorities of Russia in an era of growing inclination towards “full integration into the global trading system, as well as participation in regional economic unions. This made the assignment even more important.

With this imperative in mind, the next section addresses the sociohistorical context of the selected urban setting.

5.1.2. Historical background

Vladivostok is generally known as Russia’s easternmost large city and the final stop on the Trans-Siberian Railway. Geographically, it lies at the south-
eastern corner of Siberia, at the edge of a territory known as Outer Manchuria, a part of historic Manchuria. This area was under Chinese control for many centuries and was sparsely populated by indigenous peoples. The Russian presence began with exploratory expeditions in the Amur in the late 17th century and the early establishment of trade networks during the 18th century, which led to increasingly antagonistic relations between China and Russia. Chinese rule in Outer Manchuria came to an end with the Second Opium War (1856–1860) between Qing China and the British Empire. With China in a disadvantageous position, the Russian Empire gradually annexed Outer Manchuria through a series of bilateral treaties between 1858 and 1860. An 1862 treaty then permitted Russians to trade in China. It was in this context that Vladivostok was founded.

In 1862, the settlement was officially declared a free port and became host to administrative, military, and economic functions. In 1880, it received city status and became a separate administrative unit within Primorskaya Oblast; in 1888, it was granted the status of oblast capital. With its importance increasing, it saw an influx of peasant populations from the European part of the Russian Empire, under the Resettlement Administration in 1883. In 1889, the Vladivostok fortress was established. Descriptions of everyday life illustrate the impact this had on civic life (Avilov, 2014), with the city and the fortress functioning to some extent as a single entity. The city grew following a topography whose dominant elements are its coastline, hills, and valleys (Obertas, 2011). Port and military functions were arranged accordingly, along the coast and expanding into the small valleys.

Since its foundation, Vladivostok has had a strong transnational component, as is usually the case for port cities. It facilitated trade between the Russian Empire and China and also became a hub for European and Japanese companies operating in Manchuria, mainly in the trade of agricultural products. In that context and until the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War, the city’s cultural life, its economic role, and a certain cosmopolitan identity flourished (Obertas et al., 2016). Foreign and Russian architects designed Art Nouveau and Secession buildings that were on par with their contemporaries in Western cities. Vladivostok was further boosted by the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway and seemed to be on track to assume a key international role (Lee, 2014). The Russian Civil War, however, brought an end to this process. Civic life and economic activity were disrupted until as late as 1922. Vladivostok was declared a strategic city by the Bolsheviks and became the base of the Pacific Naval Fleet.
Between 1923 and 1941, infrastructure and heavy industrialization were prioritized (Kulichin, 2014). The early Soviet years witnessed significant destruction of buildings from the imperial period, while the first General Plan for Vladivostok largely mirrored the 1935 Moscow General Plan. With the city set to become an ideal communist metropolis, the years preceding WWII saw the beginnings of a transformation towards heavy industrialization (Richardson, 2000). During the war, urban development was put on hold; the city functioned mainly as a naval and transportation center, including managing the inflow of war prisoners to labor camps.\(^5\)

The growth of the industrial sector did not take place until the post-war period and was largely based on the establishment of ship repair plants. Vladivostok thus followed a pattern specific to the Russian Far East, where industrialization occurred only after the 1950s. This was the result of the entire region having grown to function as Russia’s military and trade outpost in the late 19th century. With private economy formally abolished after the 1920s, the city entered the second half of the 20th century with a thin socio-economic layering to which an industrial component was then added (Vlasov, 2014).

Vladivostok had its share of developmental paradoxes as early as the 1950s. During his 1954 visit to the city, Secretary General of the Communist Party Nikita Khrushchev envisioned it becoming a cultural and administrative center in the Pacific. By 1958, however, it was declared a closed city, not only for foreigners but also for Soviet citizens. Obviously, no closed city can function as the cultural center of an entire macro-region. Vladivostok lost its role and was cut off from other Pacific ports, now looking inwards to the Soviet landmass and becoming dependent on land transportation via the railway. Situated 9,000 kilometers from Moscow, the city’s position within the Soviet state was as spatiotemporally peripheral as could be. While the military and ideological divide of the Cold War obstructed economic connectivity and militarized divisions in Eurasia (Diesen, 2017), one could argue that Vladivostok constitutes an extreme case of a city denied its own geographical position for almost half a century.

The inward-focused growth was emphasized in the 1960 Decree of the Council of Ministers of the USSR “On the development of the city of Vladivostok” (Obertas, 2011: 91). The 1960 General Plan that followed provisioned a series of industrial projects and large plants that completely

\(^5\) A route initiated during the Stalinist purges in the 1930s. Prisoners were transported to northern parts of the Far East.
transformed the city.\textsuperscript{56} Alongside this and the expansion of naval uses came the extensive construction of prefabricated housing and spatial expansion. Improvements in urban infrastructure took place, and the city’s meagre cultural life grew into a relatively developed local scene (Lomova, 2014). This continued during the period of Brezhnev’s rule, resulting in a large city with improved amenities.

Thus, upon visiting Vladivostok in 1986, Mikhail Gorbachev encountered a city with improved housing stock and decent transportation and utilities; he spoke positively of the city’s perspectives. Perestroika, however, brought with it different results. Production in military enterprises froze, the economy stagnated, and the transition to private entrepreneurship led to the rise of shady activities and the formulation of regional criminal circles that became notorious across Russia. With the Russian Far East’s regional economic complexity far below that of its Korean and Japanese neighbors and now akin to that of a developing country (Shaw et al., 1995: 136), Vladivostok’s repositioning in the Pacific region from the mid-1990s started from a largely disadvantaged position. It found its role in the regional economic configuration as the hub for the import, modification, and resale of Japanese and Korean automobiles on the Russian market.

5.1.3. Sociospatial attributes

In terms of current land uses and despite its rather complex topography, the city can be roughly described in rings: The first is the city center, which has maintained a historic flair and its role as the economic, political, and cultural core. Second is the outer city center, with its mixed residential, logistics, light manufacturing, and retail uses. Residences dominate the remainder of the city district, with the usual prefab housing quarters from the 1960s-1990s, newer high-rises, garages, warehouses, and large shopping malls. Most operative industries were gradually removed from the city into industrial clusters elsewhere in the Primorsky region during the 2000s and early 2010s. These rings are less than smoothly integrated due to two main barriers: One is the extensive presence of brownfield\textsuperscript{57} areas that form physical barriers and result in low effectiveness of land use. The second is the dire condition of

\textsuperscript{56} In chemical industry, metalworks, radio communications, and others. Among them, the ship repair factories of Dalzavod (Дальзавод) and Sudoremont (Судоремонт) became iconic for the city.

\textsuperscript{57} Urban sites for potential building development that have experienced previous development, usually for industrial uses (see https://www.lexico.com/definition/brownfield).
transportation. Vladivostok has a very high rate of car ownership, poor to nonexistent parking regulations, inefficient public transportation, and high emissions rates. The fact that regional highways, transit, and freight transport cross through the city center worsens the situation.

Though not extensive in size, the city center is home to diverse architectural styles dating from the late nineteenth century to the present. It is defined by two main streets and a central square, a lively public space that hosts the main administrative and business functions, a construction site for the new Transfiguration Cathedral, and temporary public events and fairs. Sportivnaya and Tsesarevitsa, the city’s main embankments, face the Amur and the Golden Horn Bay, respectively, and function as the city’s most recognizable public spaces. Integrated into the city center is also the historic milionka quarter, a testament to the strong Chinese presence in the late 19th century. These elements demonstrate not only the city’s international past but also a certain European cultural imprint. That imprint has made the city a popular destination among Chinese, Korean, and Japanese visitors who, in a certain way, see in Vladivostok a Western city. Boasting a high concentration of diverse uses and a few pedestrian zones, the city center has acquired an increasingly service-oriented, recreational, vibrant character. But this had not been the case only a few years earlier, with the Amur and Golden Horn Bay waterfronts having been occupied by industrial and naval functions alongside fishing, cargo, and warehouses. As a result, Vladivostok had entered the 21st century with no recreational uses and poor conceptions of public space.

In terms of population, Vladivostok sank from a peak of approximately 650,000 in 1991 to a low of about 580,000 inhabitants in 2009. It has since registered slight growth and recently crossed the 600,000 threshold again (Rosstat, 2018). Though small in absolute numbers, this growth is not insignificant in the context of the Russian Far East, a federal district with a very meager demographic outlook. The decision to host the 2012 APEC Summit in the capital of the Primorsky Krai has been inscribed into state approaches to address the depopulated and geopolitically fragile Far East.

The decision to host the summit also implicitly (and, at times, explicitly) had to do with elevating Vladivostok into an interregional, if possible global hub of commerce, logistics, and, more recently, tourism and culture, streamlining a new, outward-looking orientation. This key moment in the city’s recent history would result in extensive change in the city’s materialities and policies. However, the way for this change had been paved and is traceable in earlier processes of normative change.
Figure 5.1. Timeline of a process of boosting towards convergence. The lines highlight several central moments in the history of the selected process, from the earliest expressions of a vision for the selected locality until the 2018–19 gestures towards international cooperation, also reflected in urban renewal processes. (Drawn by author)
5.2. Long-term normative change

5.2.1. The quest to internationalize

The notion of growth by internationalization in Vladivostok appeared in the not-so-distant past. Territorial development programs from the early 1990s refer to it but refrain from attributing any grand role to the city (Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation, 1992/1996) (hereafter “Minekonom”). At the city level, the main directives for urban development were set during the revision of the 1989 General Plan. These, however, remained dormant and first resurfaced in 2000, when the city ordered an update of the General Plan with a time frame of 15-20 years. The main aim was to make corrections in the General Plan that would match the new socioeconomic reality and to define development strategies within the agglomeration, also taking into consideration the “Greater Vladivostok” project. The task was undertaken by regional organizations for architectural and urban design and organizations in cooperation with the Russian Academy of Sciences (“Valentin Anikeev: GenPlan...”, 2008).

Submitted in 2003, the update suggested two development scenarios for the agglomeration: A northern, which proposed spatial expansion towards the north and the mainland, and a southern, which proposed expansion towards the southernmost edge of the city into the small island of Russkyi (at that time, Russkyi was almost void of inhabitants; it hosted a few military barracks and a prison and was linked to the city only by boat). In this 2003 study, post-Soviet Vladivostok is not portrayed differently than in the last Soviet General Plan: A city with strong military, cargo and commercial fishing port functions and with industrial, transportation, and scientific components. There also appeared the first seeds of a different discourse, with a reference to an anticipated increased interregional outreach, that would lead to stronger logistics, recreation, and tourism. Overall, improvements were expected to turn the city into a hub for international relations, culture, and science. This logic is inscribed in the 2005 report by regional research institutes (referred to in “Territoriia beskonechnogo razvitiia”, 2019), which proposed the formulation of a science and research cluster on Russkyi Island.

The submission of these grand plans resulted in adjustments to the General Plan in order to accommodate them. But the General Plan was among the documents which, as described in Chapter 4, usually became redundant almost upon publication: In late 2004, Vladivostok had acquired the status of a City District and had incorporated new territories. As this had not been anticipated in previous documents, the city ordered a new General
Plan so as to adjust. This, however, coincided with the adoption of the new Federal Codex (Government of Russia, 2004), which brought fundamental changes in the documentation of urban planning in the country. Following a series of adjustments to match the Codex, the new General Plan for the City District was not submitted until late 2007.

In the meantime, and in addition to these first normative changes in the official documents and policy reports, an announcement by the country’s leadership boosted the growth trajectory of Vladivostok. Confirming scenarios that had been circulating for some time, in early 2007 it was formally announced that Vladivostok would host the 2012 APEC Economic Leaders’ annual meeting. Thus, the extensive development of the entire agglomeration was envisioned with a strong emphasis on transportation infrastructure and with Russkyi Island receiving the bulk of hitherto unforeseen federal investments.

The years 2007 and 2008 saw significant activity on the parts of research and design institutes and policy experts with regard to updating the region-based knowledge infrastructures (Minekonom, 2007). This activity included a program with the illustrative title “Development of the city of Vladivostok as center of international cooperation in the Asia-Pacific” (Minekonom, 2008). Launched as part of a federal program that sought to address socio-economic development in the Far East (Minekonom, 2007/2017), the program emphasized the city’s role in the development of the Russian Far East, something that could be attained via the city’s increased international presence in the APR. It also specified the anticipated growth outputs and projects financed from the Federal Investment Fund; in short, it was about the creation of tens of thousands of jobs and a multifold increase in the gross regional product, the volume of shipped products, and investments in fixed assets. During the same period, a consortium headed by Moscow’s GIPROGOR conducted research on the integrated development of the city and southern Primorsky Krai (Anikeev and Obertas, 2007: 82). In those reports, extensive reconstruction and infrastructure development were suggested as ways to enhance the regional role of the city. Such aspirations were brought together in early 2008 in the form of the presidential approval of a document prepared by St. Petersburg’s NIIP that had proposed specific architectural objects and infrastructural concepts as prerequisites for successful implementation of the summit (NIIP/ROSSTROY, 2007). As

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58 Scheme for the location and architectural and urban design concepts for the objects of the 2012 APEC Summit Business Center (Схема размещения и архитектурно-градостроительной концепцией объектов делового центра саммита АТЭС) НИИП градостроительства.
noted by Anikeev and Obertas (2007), this document helped clarify the situation among the plethora of reports and studies which had become available, mainly on the questions of the development on Russkyi Island and the extensive transportation overhaul.

Beyond strictly technical aspects, the report brought into the discussion the questions of aesthetic improvement and internationalization via forging a new urban image, arguing that the large infrastructural objects—specifically, the bridges over the Golden Horn Bay, the Eastern Bosporus Strait, and across Amur Bay—would have a strong impact on visual perceptions of the city. This perception would help form a new city image, one “appropriate for Russia’s main city on the Pacific,” that would become the “visiting card” of the city. To proceed with formulating this new, “appropriate” image, the document called for dialogue with the owners of companies that occupied the given coastal zones in order for the gradual removal of such facilities to start taking place.

Meanwhile, in late 2008, the city’s General Plan was finalized by Primograzhdanproekt, the main regional research and design institute. (City of Vladivostok, 2018a [archived]); this was essentially the first General Plan after the Soviet era. It applied the latest reforms in local self-government and incorporated surrounding settlements to align with the Greater Vladivostok agglomeration scheme. It also envisaged development alongside port, industrial, scientific, administrative, cultural, and touristic functions and took into account the infrastructural changes that the summit entailed. Increasing the city’s international role was of paramount importance: Vladivostok was expected to lead the Far Eastern Federal District and become an outward-looking city. The preservation of the architectural identity and silhouette of the city was also taken into consideration. One strong focus was recreation, with projects such as the Nature Park, an Oceanarium, and recreation spaces on the southernmost islands of the City District. With the provision of those novel elements, hidden behind formal Soviet terminology, the 2008 General Plan contained the germ of a recreational, experience-based economy in the formerly closed naval port.

5.2.2. Cosmetic approaches

A follow-up volume to the General Plan (City of Vladivostok, 2011—hereafter “Provision”) drew broader guidelines and linked strategic planning choices to the construction of specific objects. Published in 2011, the Provision prescribed specific urban improvement projects, as did a governmental decree setting the guidelines for the development of a recreational area and a
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free economic zone (FEZ) on Russkyi Island (Government of Russia, 2010). Similar to other such documents, these prioritized infrastructural improvements in areas such as housing, municipal services, and transportation (Provision, 2011: 64). They stand out from other urban planning documents circulating at the time, though, in that they offer a first hint on questions of aesthetics and the image of the city. This emphasized the need for the formulation of a new image that would correspond to the city’s gateway role. Emphatically, the city was to become “the center of international cooperation of Russia with the countries of the APR” (Primorsky Krai, 2009) a large seaport, industrial, administrative, cultural, scientific-educational and tourist center in the Far East,” and the summit’s flagship objects were framed as indispensable to this process.

In that sense, the summit offered a unique opportunity for radical changes in the Vladivostok City District. The single largest project underlying the effect of boosting would be the establishment of the Far Eastern Federal University on Russkyi Island, at the southern edge of the City District. Less emphasis was put on urban renewal in the historic center: It was anticipated but did not constitute a substantial element or a goal in itself. The 2011 Provision prescribed the creation of parks and business districts in association with the summit, the preservation of the historic character of the city center and the architecture of specific quarters, and the creation of extensive new embankments along Amur Bay in the west and the Golden Horn Bay in the historic center; the accomplishment of this would necessitate the removal of existing facilities (Provision, 2011: 24–25). These proclamations were only partially materialized.

The formulation of the “sea façade” of the city and its enrichment with recreational and tourist uses was highly prioritized in the Provision. With the “Concept for Sea Façade of the City of Vladivostok for 2012 APEC Summit,” this topic was covered in detail in an annex that emphasized small-scale urban renewal actions that would promote a good city image. The annex urged:

[…] attention to the design of the details of recreation areas, parks, squares. To provide a decent urban area, special attention is required to the artistic appearance and quality of small architectural forms. Thoughtfulness in everything […] shall create a feeling of coziness. The implementation of measures described here will certainly change Vladivostok to hold the 2012 APEC Summit and make it even more beautiful. (Office of the Mayor of Vladivostok, 2010)
The emphasis on small-scale interventions illustrates an interest in urban renewal which, nonetheless, does not go beyond simple, superficial beautification. As the above fragment reveals, it was expected that such interventions would result in a “beautiful” city, but without defining what “beauty” implied. In general, the main directive of the report in relation to the summit was twofold: (1) The improvement of the “sea façade” and (2) improvements along the routes that summit guests were expected to follow. Ten such routes were identified.

It then follows that these interventions were primarily intended to create a façade along the designated path leading to the summit venues on Russkyi Island. They were not intended to adhere to any of the needs of citizens, whose opinions about the summit were never requested. These normative documents were less concerned with substantial urban renewal and improvements at the local level than with serving the infrastructural imperatives of what was understood to be a mega-event. The deepening of a problematizing of the urban condition did not take place, and associating it to local institutions was not an objective. Rather, the city was treated almost as a large Potemkin village. Similar to the sham façades raised in order to obstruct the gaze of Catherine the Great from the grim reality as she inspected Crimea in 1787, interventions such as the sea façade and the ten routes were delivered for the sake of impressing the visitors and obstructing their gazes from the everyday realities of the ill-maintained built fabric.

5.2.3. Late paradigm change

It was only after the summit that this approach gave way, allowing the addressing of the quality of urban life. Indeed, as discussed in Chapter 2.6, it was in the early 2010s that an intensification of the domestic discourse on the country’s urbanistic paradigm took hold. In the city of Vladivostok, on the other hand, traces of the questioning of the established paradigm can be detected in a 2014 study commissioned by the municipal Department for Urban Planning and Architecture and prepared by RosNIPI, the St. Petersburg-based Russian research and design institute of urban studies. Titled “Concept for Amending the Master Plan of the Vladivostok Urban District” (City of Vladivostok, 2015), that study (hereafter “Report”) identified problems and suggested solutions for the city’s development with a 40-year perspective: In the future, the city should become “a more attractive, economically competitive, modern city with a high quality of life and culture, based on the unique historical tradition of the city-port” (City of Vladivostok, 2015: 3).
The Report reflects a transformation of thinking about the urban environment. Less than a decade before, the General Plan and formal documentation had still linked the city’s development to the Soviet logic of spatial growth. Ahead of the summit, the cityscape was only superficially addressed. But RosNIPI wholeheartedly embraced a Western urbanistic discourse and proposed the alignment of Vladivostok with this trajectory: Indeed, the Report takes a rather Marxist approach, utilizing the concept of the right to the city and making brief reference to the theoretical work of David Harvey. In this light, the authors put value on social forces and socially responsible businesses and pondered the actual meaning of the concept and the “quality of urban environment” for this city.

The suggestions put forward by RosNIPI are based on a study that identified three possible development models for the city: (1) The “socialist,” essentially a continuation of socialist city development, with industrial, port, and transportation functions, state-allocated housing and social services, and not much scope for urbanism; (2) the “Asian,” with the city operating as a growth machine seeking capital investments, large-scale infrastructure projects, and mega-events; and (3) the “European,” with Vladivostok “nurturing” its citizens, acknowledging and fulfilling their right to high-quality urban spaces. Bringing the three together, the authors rejected the first model as anachronistic. Weighing the pros and cons of the other two, the Asian was rejected for consuming too many natural and economic resources, benefitting mainly private businesses such as the construction industry, and failing to provide attractive urban environments. The Report firmly advocated for the European model, which would offer small-scale, gradual improvement of the city according to local budgetary capacities and social objectives. In such a “European” city, values such as the quality of public spaces, heritage preservation, and the recreational use of nature would be prioritized. According to the authors, the successful renewal of the main embankment before the summit was the best proof of the applicability of such values to the public spaces of Vladivostok. Extending this logic would allow the creation of “a European pedestrian promenade, a total transformation of the whole city from a city for cars into one for pedestrians” (City of Vladivostok, 2015: 80).

A subtle critique of the actual impact of the 2012 APEC Summit can be detected in the Report, with the authors noting that global projects must not only be implemented, but also sustained by a functioning market rather than with additional state funds. It is furthermore argued that, with Vladivostok bending so far towards the Asian model and bound to the interests of the construction lobby, applying the European model would be possible only by
setting forth a long-term plan together with civil actors and adopting policies for efficient land use and brownfield reclamation. Urban renewal in this logic would include, to begin with, extending the formation of pedestrian areas and landscaped public spaces beyond the historic center in order “to preserve the unique panoramic view over the city center” (City of Vladivostok, 2015: 67) by creating a city-wide esplanade.

The use of language here indicates something new. By emphasizing the significance of the visual aspects of the landscape and preserving them for urban recreational purposes, the Report highlights the importance of a high-quality urban environment and associates this with urban renewal, as with pedestrianization, which would turn Vladivostok into a city worth visiting. This rationale signifies a departure from Soviet modernity and a promise to go beyond the mega-event thinking that characterized the late 2000s, i.e. to merge it with processes of urban renewal and translate them into new policies aligned with the new context of internationalization.

At the national level, such elements were gaining ground and becoming omnipresent, including in Vladimir Putin’s public addresses (i.e. Putin, 2012): Russia was to aim for smart, knowledge-based, technology-based growth. An association between the desired smart growth and urban development was made tangible in the 2016 “Federal Program for a Comfortable Urban Environment” (hereafter CUE), which would facilitate the creation of a modern urban economy in regional cities and respond to new social needs (Gerashchenko et al., 2016; Kryuchkova, 2016). At the city level, the drafting of the new General Plan in accordance with public hearings that took place in 2017 did not anticipate the developments on the ground: As with the disruptions caused by the 2007 Presidential Decree a decade before, this process, too, was overshadowed by a wave of federal aspirations. This time, they sought not to boost the entire agglomeration but to hold a small-scale intervention in the city center, which would be the culmination of the CUE.

This series of events reflects a changing normative approach that eventually came to embrace the problematizing of the urban in the late 2010s, while having already addressed urban renewal earlier: In the uneasy 1990s, normative prescriptions followed the Soviet, growth-seeking, spatially expansive model, supported by inefficient planning documentation. This approach, which can accurately be labelled post-Soviet, reached its apex with the assignment of the summit and the expressed vision of the city as an internationalized regional hub. To fulfill this assignment, the city was treated as Russia’s façade in the Pacific in an attempt to lure Asian investors and attract additional mega-events.
This, I argue, marked both the highlight and the twilight of post-Soviet urban policies: All ensuant revisions of normative frameworks looked toward contemporary urbanistic approaches. Building upon this, the municipal approach resumed with a first, well-articulated urbanistic vision shortly after the summit. Another imperative was soon added, shaping a problematizing of the urban in the second half of the 2010s. Under this new approach, the improvement of small urban spaces was prioritized, as was their timely completion for the public and the city’s international visitors. In the process, the question of urbanism became a recurring theme among incremental state interventions and a push for further internationalization of the city, its public spaces, and its policies. This substantial change was put in motion by a process of continuous allocation of resources.

5.3. Allocation of resources

5.3.1. A long, futile vision

The federal funds invested in Vladivostok in anticipation of the 2012 APEC Summit by far exceeded anything that preceded it and anything that has followed in the city. It is instructive to consider the finer details of this process.

High expectations on the part of the state and the corresponding drawing of bold plans are not new to the broader region and date back to Soviet times, if not earlier. Shortly before the dissolution of the USSR, Mikhail Gorbachev had spoken of the transformation of Vladivostok into a political, cultural, scientific, and tourist center in the Pacific Basin. However, there was no substantial expansion of trade in the APR at the time; any interaction was with regional client states (Shaw et al., 1995: 137). As early as the 1960s, Nikita Khrushchev had spoken of turning the port city into the “Soviet San Francisco” by constructing a bridge across the Golden Horn Bay to match the iconic American landmark. While this bridge was indeed included in the 1960 General Plan and the ones that followed it, its realization was postponed due to high costs and technical complexity (Anikeev and Obertas, 2007: 66). Postponement to an undefined point in the future would extend to half a century.

The late 1980s had, then, passed on a vision according to which Vladivostok should take advantage of its proximity to advanced neighbors. Instead of a distant outpost of the insular Soviet state, there emerged the possibility for it to become a window to the world, a regional hub within a globally integrated Pacific economy. The conditions were advantageous, as the Asian economic boom was already underway. Late Soviet and perestroika planners
were aware of the shift taking place, but they did not manage to ride the wave: Though bold visions were drafted, the city lacked the means to materialize any of them due to economic contraction and political instability (Sevastianov, 2013: 12). After Yeltsin re-opened the port to the international community, it was only the informal economy that counterbalanced the post-perestroika stalemate and sustained large parts of the population. In the long 1990s, that informality was left unchecked, and rampant criminality ensued. This gradually ceased with the merging of criminal networks with municipal and regional politics and the relative stability that took hold after the ascent of Putin.

The federal development programs that outline the main growth objectives for the Russian Far East of that period make brief reference to Vladivostok, anticipating its increased regional role. In 1996, the much needed improvement of the city’s infrastructure was prescribed. Other than demonstrating continuity of policies, however, these programs reveal no prioritization or preferential treatment of Vladivostok over other cities in the Far East. The “Greater Vladivostok” regional project, on the other hand, disclosed the aim to integrate the Primorsky Krai into the APR and increase the international reach of the regional capital. Even this project, though, coincided suspiciously with the announcement of the new federal urban planning regulations which introduced development in aggregate with surrounding agglomeration settlements: Thus, the “Greater Vladivostok” project has also been described as an attempt to formulate a conurbation in one of the new agglomerations of Russia so as to be better positioned to attract federal funds (Anikeev, 2012; Anikeev and Obertas, 2007). On the whole, with disadvantages due to weak municipal structures and resources, criminal networks taking over key economic sectors, and dismembered institutions, the period in no way encouraged discussions about the quality of life in Vladivostok. Nonetheless, first traces of a federal policy for enhancing the role of the city can be traced in these post-Soviet regional development programs.

5.3.2. Streamlining the vision

It was the 2007 Presidential Decree that gave the official impetus for boosting the growth of Vladivostok. In the words of First Deputy Prime Minister Igor Shuvalov, the 2012 summit was “the project of the century” (стройка века) that would transform the Pacific city into “the third capital” and link Russia to the APR. Of course, Vladivostok was not projected to attain global city status, but simply to compete with secondary cities such as Busan in Korea or Tianjin in China, securing a larger share of investments, hosting inter-
national events, and serving as a permanent seat of interregional organizations. This was possible if the proximity to global powerhouses such as Tokyo and Seoul were to be used, with both cities a mere two-hour flight from the Russian port. It is instructive to observe these grandiose statements as the discursive justification of the investments that would follow.

In the next years, the federal government invested unprecedented resources in order to support this cause. Primorsky Krai soon became the best-endowed region in the Far Eastern Federal District. With Sakhalin, Yakutia, and Khabarovsk having been the main recipients of capital investment in previous years, Primorsky surpassed them by far in 2010 and 2011 and received almost one-third of the annual fixed capital investments in the entire Federal District. Characteristically, in 2009, with capital investments in most regions in Russia slowing down in the shadow of the global economic crisis, Primorsky saw a 174.3% year-to-year increase in fixed capital investment, which is the highest increase among all regions in Russia and one of the highest in any federal subject recorded by Rosstat since 2005 (Rosstat [ca. 2019]). Billions of rubles flooded the Vladivostok City district alone, and the amounts invested ahead of the summit surpassed the entire city’s annual GMP. On top of that, the newly designated special economic zone on Russkyi Island was expected to accelerate the region’s economic growth.

5.3.3. Spectacular urbanization

The aftermath of the 2012 APEC Summit is no less interesting than its prelude as it extended well beyond one-time boosterism. It signaled the initiation of a process of continuous resource allocation and preferential treatment of Vladivostok, which was in any case aligned with the increased state interest in the Russian Far East. A few months after the summit’s conclusion, Vladimir Putin once again pointed to the development of Siberia and the Far East as “Russia’s national priority for the entire 21st century” (“Præzident: pod”em Sibir ...”, 2013). Shortly before, he had initiated the Far East and Baikal Region Development Fund, which was expected to implement large infrastructural and economic development projects based on contemporary PPP principles. In the wake of the fund’s meager performance, Putin ordered the preparation of the “State Corporation for the Development of Eastern Siberia and the Far East,” whose head offices would be located in
Vladivostok (“V ramkakh raboty…”, 2012). The city was considered well situated to receive additional federal support and to coordinate the anticipated flow of investments in a territory covering almost one-third of Russia. Although the State Corporation did not come to fruition, the streamlining of the city’s internationalization occurred nonetheless: For the new university campus on Russkyi Island, for example, the APEC Summit was just the beginning. Its facilities were quickly put to use for the hosting of events such as expos and forums on a regular basis. The most prestigious among these has been the annual Eastern Economic Forum (EEF), established in 2015 by presidential decree with the aim to function as “the biggest international platform for discussing the strategy for developing political, economic and cultural ties between Russia and Asia Pacific” (Forumvostok, 2018): Indeed, the first visit of a Chinese president to Vladivostok took place in 2018, with Xi Jinping arriving to attend the EEF and sign the continuation of the Russian–Chinese cooperation program for regional investments. The first meeting of North Korea’s Kim Jong-Un with Vladimir Putin, in 2019, also took place on the university premises.

Notwithstanding the symbolic weight of these events, the city’s increasing international visibility is demonstrated in a series of other incidents: Chinese economic interest was expressed with the announcement of a major investment in the city’s shipyards. Korean links were forged in a deal for building a Hyundai cargo route from Busan to Europe via Vladivostok. Similarly, with the inauguration of the first Tokyo–Vladivostok passenger flights, in 2019 the city was directly connected to Japan for the first time in history.

In domestic affairs, power games—including the question of the distribution of resources and political power in the Far East—peaked before the 2018 regional elections, with the candidate favored and generously supported by the ruling United Russia party (Mukhametshina, 2018) announcing that the seat of the capital of the Far Eastern Federal District should move from Khabarovsk to Vladivostok (Kremlin, 2018a; “Trutnev: initsiativu pere-nosa…”, 2018). This was justified by the better geographical positioning of the latter, which would benefit from increased international trade volumes, more links to the APR, and additional federal revenues and support such as the relocation of federal offices and ministries from Khabarovsk. From his side, rather than elaborating on urbanistic discourses of any sort, the governor put the question in very pragmatic terms when discussing federal

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59 A sensational commentary with the title “All power to Siberia” (Melnikov et al., 2012) followed: An indirect reference to both Lenin’s “All power to the Soviets” and its paraphrasing in Yeltsin’s motto, “All power to the regions.”
financial support. According to him, money would pour into the city “because it will have to look decent” (“Kozhemiako: perenos stolitsy…”, 2018).

This blunt statement is characteristic of an approach, widespread among higher state officials, that conflated mega-events and boosterism with the notion of the quality of urban living. Indeed, so it was, and, towards the end of 2018, Vladivostok was granted the title of capital of the Far Eastern Federal District, spurring discontent in neighboring Khabarovsk, whose elites saw the city being stripped of its advantageous position. Meanwhile, the updated national Spatial Development Strategy also prioritized Vladivostok and provisioned further investments (Government of Russia, 2019; Ministry for the Development of the Russian Far East and Arctic, 2019). In addition, a special administrative region (SAR) was established on Russkyi Island by presidential decree (Kremlin, 2018b), in response to the 2018 U.S. sanctions against certain Russian individuals and companies, anticipating their “repatriation” from international offshore jurisdictions.

To summarize, the allocation of resources to the city reached a historic peak in anticipation of the 2012 APEC Summit. These resources were predominantly directed towards developing agglomeration-level infrastructure and producing a spectacular urbanization effect (Ch. 2.4.1). Interestingly enough, federal support did not fade after the lights went off. On the contrary, it took a qualitative shift as the state’s stakes in the APR remained high or increased. Vladivostok received preferential treatment and was upgraded not only into a hub for international cooperation, but also the district’s capital city. The importance of Russkyi Island skyrocketed in less than a decade; from an almost empty islet, it turned into the host of high-profile international events and, as of 2018, an SAR. In that context, the Deputy Prime Minister’s pompous statement about Vladivostok turning into the “third capital” of Russia (see Ch. 5.3.2) no longer sounded pompous: The quest to lift it from isolation and turn it into Russia’s political, economic, and cultural face to the APR seemed to be bearing fruit in 2019. Vladivostok (or at least its façade) was (or at least appeared to be) internationalizing.

But how did this avalanche of resources in the formerly stagnant city play out for the city’s materialities? The summit triggered significant changes in that sense as well. If, in 2012, these mainly addressed the agglomeration and sought only to beautify the city’s façade, a few years later the combined effect of normative changes and resource inflow had started cracking that façade, reaching smaller urban spaces and everyday city life and triggering a discussion on a new kind of urbanism.
5.4. Translation outputs

5.4.1. Post-Soviet façade

The infrastructural upgrading that took place within less than five years in the Vladivostok City District was significant by all measures, especially in proportion to the size of the local economy. With the establishment of the new Far Eastern Federal University campus in the south of the city, the second half of the 2010s saw Russkyi Island turning into the main outward-looking educational, cultural, and event hub of the Russian Far East. The transportation infrastructure upgrades that were needed to support this turn formed the agglomeration’s north–south “development corridor” strategy. This included the redrawing of city transportation system, the renovation of the city airport, new highways (including a low bridge on Amur Bay), the high-speed railway connecting to the neighboring city of Ussuriysk, and the construction of two impressive cable-stayed bridges. One linked Russkyi Island to the land and was proudly proclaimed to be the longest in the world, while the other bypassed the city’s congested streets and became an instant urban landmark. Ahead of the summit and half a century after Khrushchev’s vision of a Soviet San Francisco, Vladivostok finally had its own Golden Bridge. This important engineering feat produced a strong visual effect and underlined the promise of prosperity and internationalization. However, the general public rather passively observed, and remained largely indifferent to, the 2012 APEC Summit and the other high-profile international events that followed. This was perhaps justifiable; despite the generous federal investments in agglomeration development, the summit did not bring the anticipated volumes of FDI (Sevastianov, 2013) either at the regional level or in the city itself. Following the summit, everyday life in the city changed little. The average resident of Vladivostok was primarily affected by city traffic jams and had no great interest in a new airport or in what was happening in the Russkyi Island complex. But the summit had been about the latter, and improvements in the city center were mostly cosmetic. Even the use of the Golden Bridge itself was denied local users: Soon after its delivery, the expensive engineering feat was closed to pedestrians; only cars were allowed to cross it. As of late 2017, the designated pedestrian paths were permanently blocked by police lines.

Similarly, the discourse around the summit as enhancer of the city’s cultural life did not in reality reflect upon civic needs. Only a few months after the presidential decree, the report by NIIP was ready (NIIP/ROSTROY, 2007). The first suggestion – to hold the summit near Patroclus Bay in the
southeastern part of the city – was, rather, based on transportation engineering. Authorities were reluctant to decide but needed to submit the city’s dossier before the 2007 summit in Australia; thus, the decision to hold the summit on Russkyi Island was taken singlehandedly by Herman Greff, then Minister of the Economy, who was invited to visit Vladivostok and make a determination (Anikeev and Obertas, 2017: 113). Other early discussions about the construction of summit-related architectural objects, including five-star hotel complexes and a new opera house, were all indicative of maximalist approaches that were adopted without being contingent on existing urbanity and (any) local discourses. They instead revolved around power games among resourceful actors detached from everyday life in the city. In addition, stories about mismanagement and cost overrides in relation to the summit surfaced frequently, resulting in a widespread feeling among citizens of being left on their own. Reflecting upon the extensive investments and construction fervor and implying the lack of consultation with the local community, an interviewee skeptically noted: “… and so it went, and it was successful, and then it was over. And now we are left with all these things” (Interview 24).

Even the scientific discourse about retrofitting the new international image of Vladivostok in the APR became fixated with summit objects (Minakir and Prokapalo, 2011: 98), and, as mentioned above (Ch. 5.2.3), the cosmetic repairs of apartment buildings along the guest routes were simply that: Improvements meant to boost the city image’s for one-time visitors and not to address local needs. On another note, urban renewal works ahead of the summit did take place in the city center. By 2011, the anticipated facelift-style changes were praised on local news with triumphant titles such as “The city will become unrecognizable” (Salkov, 2011). Indeed, tangible physical change was observed mainly in the sea façade, with extensive reconstruction and repairs to the Korabelnaya waterfront and the Sportivnaya harbor. Nine squares, several central streets, and sidewalks and public parks were also repaired. These works indeed helped the coastal zone acquire a more clearly recreational character. The same was true of the extension of the Tsesarevitsa along parts of the Dalzavod (see Figure 5.2). Smaller decorative and identity-forming elements, such as a new memorial celebrating Vladivostok’s role in WWII, were arranged at the eastern end of the waterfront.

While these interventions were primarily parts of a process of arranging the setting of a façade for the 2012 summit and were described as such in the documentation that had preceded them, they nevertheless, although as a side effect, resulted in something of a retrofitting of the city center for the first
time in decades. This first piece of the urban renewal process, arranged quickly and only to serve the purposes of the international event, provided the foundation upon which the problematizing of the urban occurred shortly thereafter.

5.4.2. Fragments of urbanism

Regardless of their association or lack thereof with the summit, one characteristic of these interventions has been their incompleteness. My field observations in 2015 made this clear; only three years after the summit, tiles on the pedestrianized central boulevards were already cracking. Improvements near the train station remained half-finished. At the Tsesarevitsa waterfront, landscaping and paving were incomplete. However, the area was clearly popular among locals.

![Figure 5.2. The Tsesarevich waterfront, turned into a popular leisure spot overseeing the Golden Horn. On the left lie the facilities of Dalzavod, still partly operational. The elegant silhouette of the Golden Bridge, constructed for the 2012 APEC Summit, complements the quickly changing urbanscape. (Photograph by author, September 2015)](image)

The elegant mass of the cable bridge dominated the landscape, while the background was framed by a sea of Soviet-era panel blocks climbing the hilly topography. The entire paysage was unusual but pleasant to look at. It also seemed temporary. Observing this peculiar coexistence of the most diverse
uses, one had the feeling that something was about to happen, that this city was quickly changing. On my second visit in 2017, however, the area looked exactly the same: Operative naval boats, tourist ferries, ship repair facilities, cargo trains, the unfinished fashionable landscaping of the embankment, a street permanently blocked by traffic nearby, an unfinished five-star Hyatt Regency hotel on a prestigious plot right off the sea, a WWII square equipped with an entire submarine, a small monument to Aleksander Solzhenitsyn, an unfinished cathedral, and groups of Chinese tourists wandering along them. I came to wonder whether fragmentation was in fact part of the city’s identity.

These discrepancies came at a cost, not only for private businesses but also for the municipality that was not able to tap into the city’s improved image and the booming tourist flows of the mid-2010s. Approaching the pylon of the Golden Bridge, one could not avoid wondering how and why, five years after the summit and with the surrounding areas already landscaped and delivered to the public, an area of over 1000 square meters at the foot of the bridge stood fenced off and empty. When I asked about it, I was informed that this was due to a lack of coordination or simply the indifference of ministries. The Ministry of Defense, under whose ownership the plot stood empty, was under no pressure to proceed with a transfer to the municipality or some other authority that would implement the previously approved urban renewal plan. This plan included turning the plot into a modern open-air fish market that would cater to visitors strolling along the waterfront, but its implementation was postponed, depriving the municipal budget of much-needed revenues.

I observed a similar discrepancy in the reclamation of territories near the Dalzavod Wharf for civic and commercial uses. The renovation of a cluster of industrial buildings from the Imperial period was remarkably well executed and framed by careful landscaping. With the nearby seafront bustling with people, the area looked ready to accommodate any kind of cultural, retail, or other uses, as is the case with brownfield reclamation internationally: It would be an excellent case of contemporary urban renewal indeed. But the complex stood empty and inaccessible, under the management of Rosneft, as I found out. I asked my interviewee his opinion about this paradox. Wouldn’t it be in the interest of Rosneft to activate it and appeal to the city? To his knowledge, Rosneft was under no pressure to do anything in the area, as any profit from the commercial use of the complex would be insignificant for such a company. He also emphasized the importance of the fact that policies were drafted elsewhere and not necessarily in the interests of the city’s inhabitants: “You see, Rosneft doesn’t care about Vladivostok or their
image here. Decisions are made in Moscow; their top management lives there, not here” (Interview 25).

This comment was at once imprinted on my mind as it unlocked a series of similarly inexplicable encounters in my observations across the city. These were the several material artefacts of the summit era that stood semi-finished for no obvious reason, a testament to the fact that there existed an additional layer of mega-event attributes. Such was the case of the two five-star Hyatt Regency hotels, both at prime seafront locations, both bankrupt and surrounded by scandals and complex legal issues that would deter any investor (see Figure 5.3). The case of the semi-finished 25-floor towers of luxury condo apartments was similar; this project had involved the former mayor, who by that time had fled arrest and was living in southeast Asia. The summit, it seemed, had produced multiple Potemkin villages which were now dotting the urbanscape.

Figure 5.3. The unfinished Hyatt Hotel, a frozen project at a prime location by the Amur Bay. (Photograph by author, October 2017)

Under these circumstances, the first time something resembling a mega-event took place in eastern Russia had mixed material outputs: Not futile, but failing to bear results proportionate to the resources invested in it. On one hand, the infrastructural upgrading of the entire agglomeration was ap-
parent. On the other, a feature common in mega-event boosterism (as described in Ch.2.4.1) was also clearly in place; the flood of resources in a city lacking the capacities to absorb them had created a series of development errors for which no one was held accountable. In addition, a kaleidoscope of foggy stories of corruption surrounded them. Several years after the summit, large state holdings were uninterested in capitalizing on the event for the sake of the quality of urban life, while international private companies were reluctant to invest in a city that had not managed to leave behind its ill-famed past and had yet to reintroduce itself to the outside world.60

The 2014 Report was on spot: It was not enough to dream of “European” urbanism in Vladivostok or to cite the right to the city (see Ch. 5.2.3). Moreover, it was futile to expect such policies to appear following the implementation of a mega-event. They had to be requested on behalf of the city, but the layer of actors that would advocate for it was very thin. Apparently, there was no pressure to fix the Potemkin villages, scattered as they were around post-summit Vladivostok. Neither the civil nor the private sector or city officials seemed interested in or capable of acting.

5.4.3. Spectacular fragmentation

The main feature of the mega-event boosterism was, thus, a mishmash of discrepancies with regard not only to the physical urban space, but also to the landscape of actors involved in managing and giving it form. Compared to infrastructural improvements at the agglomeration level, urbanistic interventions in the city were fragmented and minuscule. Against this background, the CUE aimed at a different set of outcomes. In comparison to the summit and the strong normative rearrangement that preceded and accompanied it, the program planned a rather small reach, focusing on specific central public spaces. Despite its smaller scale, the program was no less ambitious with regards to the impact it sought to have. In the words of local journalists, it guaranteed the establishment of “a comfortable city center, an attractive waterfront, green parks and a cultural scene” (“Kak izmenit’ gorod…”, 2017).

Instilling a cutting-edge urbanist discourse in Vladivostok was, however, built upon mismatches, as my on-site observations of areas under land-

60 The story of the SAR on Russkyi Island is characteristic: Its establishment in 2018 came as a reaction to international pressure rather than genuine response to investors’ interests. Indeed, by 2016, the island’s FEZ had been abolished; in the six years that had passed since its establishment, not a single foreign investor had set up businesses on Russkyi Island, the 2012 APEC Summit’s most generously endowed area.
scaping made clear. Some of the plots were spatially disconnected from the city grid, and some were even difficult to reach. Others were a mix of greenfield and brownfield areas with no evident corresponding public use. Still others were ad hoc free areas used for recreation, and some had remained obscure and were considered unsafe. While an architect involved in the program appeared optimistic about the potential of the plots under land-
scaping, a more critical planner remained highly skeptical of designers arriving from Moscow and producing glossy promotional material for their program, because:

[t]hey decided to work on these areas without asking the owners what they think about these developments, they produced all these fancy 3D drawings and renderings. I can also show you tons of renderings for these very same areas, prepared by the city. But what do they mean? Not much. (Interview 24)

Indeed, urban renewal within the CUE was based on a series of mismatches as well. The central plots of the Yubileynyi Beach/Sportivnaya Harbor were programmatically thought of as a single integrated territory, but a “start and things will happen” approach was applied. An architect explained that it was expected that “small investors and entrepreneurs will want to open businessses here” (Interview 21) as she presented the rationale behind the specific interventions. Indeed, the landscaped public spaces attracted not only business interest, but also the general public, as another young designer explained:

We have no experience of public life, outdoor cafes and bars. I mean “we” in general, all of us in Vladivostok. So business owners were reluctant – “If this isn’t happening anywhere, why would it happen here?”, they thought, I guess. But then somebody opened a small burger place, and it worked. Then a second small place appeared. And the space started becoming popular. This summer it was full […]. We saw that people enjoy sitting by the sea. It was like a revelation to all of us – how come this hadn’t happened for so long? (Interview 20)

With people flocking to the new designated areas, the young professionals, proceeding according to trial and error and the very recent experience of a materialized spectacular urbanization, became carriers of convergence towards the international future that lay ahead. This, beyond urbanism, is what the summit’s inherited urbanscape stood for. Similarly, projects aiming towards enhancing the profile of a cultured Vladivostok continued to be inaugurated across the city, such as regional branches of major cultural institutions including the Hermitage Museum, the Mariinsky Theater, and
the Academy of Russian Ballet. Emphatically, the cultural institutions of Primorsky would be “assigned federal status” (“Учреждениям культуры...”, 2018). The combination of tourism, recreational activities, and cultural events was further promoted at the regional level with the establishment of institutions such as the oceanarium on Russkyi Island. This continued demonstration of spectacular processes laid down the path to international convergence.

The urban renewal processes followed a slightly different trajectory. While the improvements of the 2000s did not elicit a fundamental change in the ways public spaces were addressed in the city, limited as they were, the mid-2010s saw a tangible change in the transition from a mega-event boosterist thinking and its dissolution into fragments of a contemporary urbanistic problematic. The processes associated with the summit had predominantly sought to enhance the agglomeration and the international profile of Vladivostok, not to cultivate any local urbanistic discourse per se. Thus, while the agglomeration was rapidly changing in anticipation of the city’s worlding, urban policies remained typically post-Soviet. Any reflection on international urbanism or the formulation of corresponding policies occurred later, when physical change had already occurred and the summit-initiated resources had been invested, mismanaged, or depleted.

In the end, the combined result of the changed normative approach and the state insistence on turning the city into an internationalized, event-oriented hub in the APR fueled by federal resources (at first material and then increasingly knowledge-intensive) was a landscape of small successes in a sea of mismanagement. The overall output has therefore been a fragmented yet spectacular urbanscape. In other words, it is that spectacular fragmentation whose main function is to promise international convergence. Indeed, a spirit of optimism had been instilled among these fragments. In a city having had little time to take in the summit-era boost, a small local agency has sought to take advantage of cracks in the junctures of normative change from mega-event boosting toward small-scale urbanism and to link them into an internationalized urbanity.

5.5. Actors-boosters

5.5.1. Post-Soviet inertia

Before the summit, researchers pointed to the mismatch between local realities and the federal vision: Soviet Vladivostok had been an isolated outpost, and not a window to Asia, for too long. It lacked the prerequisites to
turn into a global, knowledge-intensive city, and hosting the summit would not magically reverse this, no matter how generous the resources invested or impressive the infrastructure upgrades. On the other hand, advantageously placed actors could ride the tide and benefit from the resource inflow. A planner casually referred to several cases of fund mismanagement and cronyism by political figures who sought to advance their own interests when, upon drafting plans for the summit,

Moscow asked, “What do you need, what should we invest in?” And we said, “We need a new theater [because my wife is an actress], we also want a bridge [because we have been talking about it for decades] and hey, we will need another bridge to Russkyi.” And Moscow asked again “Okay, how much will this cost?” And we reply, “X amount,” and Moscow says, “That’s too much, do it with half!” And we agree, and then there is a cost override, of course! (Interview 25)

This is not unique to Vladivostok; on the contrary, previous research has argued that in Russia, hosting mega-events was instrumentalized into a de facto policy in a time when policies for territorial development oscillated between promoting equal and focused development (Orttung and Zhemukhov, 2014). Such was the case of the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics, whose organization unleashed a wave of regional-level infrastructure investments. The cost-override “hype” that has surrounded studies of mega-events in Russia does not account for the fact that mega-event cost overrides are the rule rather than the exception (see, for example, Flyvbjerg, 2017; Flyvbjerg et al., 2016), regardless of the host country, while the discussion can be extended to include all kinds of megaprojects (see Flyvbjerg et al., 2002).

However, the situation surrounding the 2012 APEC Summit was more complex. First of all, as mentioned earlier, the summit itself hardly qualified as a mega-event, but it was approached as such. For several years, the city lived and breathed for the summit: In relative terms, the summit was a mega-event and demonstrated concomitant attributes. Many changes occurred regarding the placement, final size, and surface covered by the summit objects, but there were also legislative changes in the land charter. Scandals, delays, and conflicts were common, with two mayors, four vice mayors and project curators, and five city head architects changing or dismissed (Anikeev and Obertas, 2007: 82). Again, this is not unusual in Russia: In a context of distinct neo-patrimonialism (Makarychev and Yatsyk, 2015), mega-events in this country have been shown to serve to distribute rents to elite players (Orttung and Zhemukhov, 2014) or trigger processes of lobbying by regional
authorities on their quests for access to federal funding (Kinossian, 2012).
The anomalies in local government and administration referred to here should thus be viewed through this lens, that is, as rearrangements in the local and regional constellations of political power; also significant is the role of informal economy and power structures in the recent history of the city. On a positive note, some of these studies (Alekseyeva, 2014) occasionally leave a window open to mega-events’ potential to enhance civil society and build social capital.

The abovementioned anomalies were covered by the spectacular urbanization effect: Shortly after the summit, the city administration was ready to adopt an optimistic rhetoric. The department for architecture and urban planning could claim that the city had entered a new era of prosperity for which new ideas and projects were sought. To attest to this, it exhibited several approved projects for urban renewal in the municipal website—only to admit, however, that there had as yet been no interest expressed from potential investors (City of Vladivostok, 2018b [archived]). An interviewee expressed doubts when discussing the department’s approach to urban renewal, as the projects were all “too ambitious. No one knows when they will be implemented, where the money will come from. I believe they show them just for the sake of it” (Interview 20).

As of late 2017, the municipal website exhibited 15 such projects. Most of them were situated in the city center or north of it, in the areas of Pervaya Rechka and Vtoraya Rechka. Municipal visions for these 15 projects included aquamarine, recreational, and business complexes; yacht facilities; apart-hotels; and the total redevelopment of the port terminal. Apparently, the implementation of these visions is perpetually postponed, despite the new era of prosperity that the city is supposedly experiencing.

While municipal visions awaited investor interest, the private sector and freelancing professionals in the field of urban design had grown distrustful of municipal authorities, viewing private businesses as more reliable, more adaptable and flexible, and even more honest (Interviews 20, 21, 23). Upon discussing their relationships, the first thing a young architect mentioned to give me a hint of the situation was that “the head of the Architecture Department is a lawyer, so... she sees things like a lawyer. She can’t think as an architect” (Interview 21). The interviewee wanted to emphasize the incompetence and irrelevant background of local authorities, while others had no difficulty presenting several examples of upfront corruption and cronyism. Positive evaluations of the relationship between the private and public sectors
with respect to the summit were also made, but these stressed the impact of individuals who made things work despite the abovementioned issues:

A lot of things happened back then, there was another mayor, there were people you could talk to. Nowadays there isn’t anybody. The mayor has his interests, regional authorities have their interests, they are hard to reach. (Interview 23)

Such comments emphasize not only the role of individual charisma, which includes both higher authorities and figures that stand lower in the local political power hierarchy, but also its other side: The unstable configuration of institutions in which things that seem to work one day can suddenly shut down the next. A similar lack of coordination also characterized the relations between municipal authorities and the managing directors of the Zarya Center for Contemporary Art (CCA), the city’s newest private non-profit cultural center. As a curator admitted, coordination of actions between the cultural center and the city:

[...] just doesn’t work. We had asked, for example, for an extra night bus for the Night of Culture; they don’t even care to assist with such a trivial thing. They look at their own small tasks, not at changing the city, they just do what they are supposed to do. It’s a paralyzed structure. [...] We had invited a street artist [...] His project was an installation at a bus stop. We got permission, and he worked on it. Within a few days his installation had been torn down by municipal workers. When we complained, we found out that nobody had informed those workers; they didn’t know that this was an art object. (Interview 26)

Emphasizing the incompetence and indifference of municipal authorities and personnel whom private businesses and non-governmental institutes face in their interactions extends to touch upon another issue, which is the outdatedness of these structures and their knowledge with regard to new urban economy and culture as well as the thinness of such institutions themselves in a city lacking a substantial creative scene. Apparently, the university curricula in related design faculties are old-fashioned, while lecturers do not follow trends and “don’t teach students anything that would prepare them to work in art management, for example, or curation” (Interview 26). This observation contrasts with another reality, which is the generous federal support for the establishment of museums, opera houses, and theaters. Inherited

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61 Established in 2013 at the premises of a former garment factory, Zarya has been the personal endeavor of an art patron who envisioned creating the first creative cluster in the Russian Far East. Operating independent of the state, the young Zarya CCA has indeed become visible in both the domestic and international art scenes (see: http://www.fabrikazarya.ru/zarya/o-nas/).
from the summit, those institutions represented the façade that spectacular urbanization managed to introduce, but little more. The articulation of the problematizing of the urban into something that would result in successful urban policies and urban renewal arrived at a later stage and not as a direct result of the spectacular urbanization processes triggered by the summit.

5.5.2. Articulating urbanism

The policy mobilities associated with mega-event boosterism bore fruit after the summit rather than before it. While mega-event policies saw the translation of boosterism into “spectacular urbanization,” they only partially translated urban renewal processes into contextualized policies. As demonstrated, it was in 2014 that a shift towards urban renewal processes was suggested in normative documents. It was at the same time that the mega-event’s spectacular urbanization, the series of large urban infrastructural works, started producing tangible results by serving as the infrastructure for the hosting of international conventions and forums. Thus, processes of knowledge transfer and translation took off after the summit.

With the heritage of the summit having crystallized into formally instituted international events and venues hosting them, but not having contributed to any problematization of the urban of equivalent magnitude, in late 2016, four teams of local architects and designers were assigned the landscaping of designated public spaces in the city center seafront in the framework of the CUE (see Ch. 4.6). However, participating architects reported a lack of coordination between city authorities and the Ministry, agreeing that the city had acted very rigidly, and the Ministry chose not to “push and complicate” (Interview 20) the implementation of the program.

This disassociation indicates that acts of translation took place under a conflicting multiplicity of interests. With the 2012 summit, the imposition of a state vision based on a long story of normative change and supported by the allocation of significant resources had resulted in Vladivostok’s agglomeration development as part of spectacular urbanization. This was covered, both officially and practically, and yet governance had been left largely intact: Individuals came and left, but municipal structures remained archaic, consistent with spectacular urbanization’s cronyist politics yet incompatible with the delicate task of attaining an internationalized city via processes of urban policy translation.

It took the CUE to reveal the full extent of this extreme mismatch. To overcome it, Strelka CB penetrated the actor landscape and rearranged local
urban policies and the urban space itself by dictating which areas should be landscaped. As such, the combination of spectacular urbanism and fragmentation policies generated a convergent urbanism with a degree of intrusiveness into both urban spaces and local actor configurations, moving toward a hybrid set of policies that would fit the internationalized city. In this context, urbanistic thought emerged beyond local administrative structures. Sponsored by the state, benefitting from knowledge transfer, and thirsty for an opportunity to unleash their underutilized talent in a city offering myriad areas in need of renewal, young professionals enthusiastically seized the chance. A graphic designer stressed the building of a feeling of community and professional solidarity as an outcome of the CUE, since “we understand that it’s better to help each other. Who knows, maybe it would be similar to forming our own small Union of Architects” (Interview 20).

The designer’s statement offers a glimpse of positive side effects that contradict the portrayal of the CUE as an all-encompassing, hierarchical control mechanism. After all, the program allowed local actors a certain degree of flexibility, even permitting them to make small alterations to plans. As one interviewee commented, “[w]e added the underused area that lies near the Art College, and they agreed. I always wanted to make it more visible” (Interview 23). Even personal affiliations with the city’s urban space came to the fore in this process, with another planner recalling “the idea of this waterfront opening to the public since my childhood […] I was imagining how this place could be” (Interview 20). All in all, a sense of local pride was expressed, solidified into a feeling of belonging and acting in the present spatiotemporal context with an eye to the future.

Some years ago, you could have said it’s not worth staying in Vladivostok. For me, now this is the place to be. Maybe this happened because of the APEC. It’s not happening in other cities; we are lucky to have had this. [...] There are things happening, the city is expanding, Russkyi Island also, this will bring more changes, it already has. (Interview 23)

This assurance is linked to the formal objective of the CUE to boost the careers of young local professionals while changing public space materialities: Indeed, by late 2017 the program was extended for another four years. However, that objective hinged on the spectacular urbanization inherited from the summit period, which was predicated on the normative documentation of the early 2010s. Thus, a thread connects the normative modifications that had aimed at internationalizing the region by boosting its capital city and the actions of young designers seeking to converge their
works with the coming internationalization, traceable in the cracks generated by earlier translation processes.

This small local scene of professionals in creative fields has been the most adaptive to the arriving policies, mobilized under a “start with what you have” motto. The provision of rather low-budget professional services has been complemented by a flourishing set of services by local entrepreneurs in the leisure and entertainment industries that court the growing impact of Vladivostok’s urban tourism. These industries grow alongside state imperatives, regional politics, and private economic interests, all of which conflict over their right to the city. This cracking of the actor landscape has gone together with the cracking of the policies landscape. Going back to a long history of assigned internationalization, the Pacific port has become the terrain of a peculiar global–local articulation that extends far beyond the mega-event effect.

5.5.3. Granting convergence

A step analogous to the addressing of local matters by the state mechanism can be observed in the activation of the governmental corporation DOM.RF. Increasingly overshadowing the municipal authorities, the corporation sought to streamline urban policies in a series of fast-track processes; in coordination with regional institutions, DOM.RF ordered the landscaping of an abandoned park and the unblocking of a bankrupt housing cooperative project on Russkyi Island (“DOM.RF vyneset...”, 2018; “DOM.RF vzidal...”, 2018). Strelka’s experts presented a master plan for another part of the island (DOM.RF, 2017; Scherbakova, 2017). The state development corporation Vnesheconombank, too, entered the discussion on boosting urban development in the Far East by setting aside “obsolete approaches,” now seeking solutions together with business partners, as CEO Igor Shuvalov stated (EEF, 2018). Addressing the EEF, Shuvalov shared an anecdote that revealed what “obsolete” meant to Vnesheconombank:

Following his San Francisco visit, Khrushchev was (supposedly) asked: “Could Vladivostok really become San Francisco?” He thought about it and replied: “Well, yes, if the mayor of San Francisco was the mayor of Vladivostok.” (DOM.RF, 2018a)

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62 Established in 1997 as the Agency for Housing Mortgage Lending (AHML) (Агентство ипотечного жилищного кредитования – АИЖК) and renamed DOM.RF in March 2018, represented by the Federal Agency for State Property Management.
This was the same Shuvalov who, ten years earlier as prime minister, had referred to the summit as the “project of the century” (Ch. 5.3). Furthermore, Vnesheconombank sought to open up and internationalize the problematizing of the urban in the post-summit city by engaging international actors from neighboring areas: As part of a novel partnership, the Japanese bureau of Nikken Sekkei prepared a master plan for two strategic development areas in Vladivostok at the order of the governmental Foundation for the Unified Institute for Development in Housing (DOM.RF, 2017). Although the scheme of the partnership was novel, the suggested areas for redevelopment were not; both were identified as development priority areas in the 2014 Report as well as on the city’s website (City of Vladivostok, 2018b [archived]).

These gestures demonstrate not only an increase in federal stakes in the area but also the will to achieve two things: First, the streamlining of urban development and systematization of PPP solutions, eschewing municipal mechanisms and under the aegis of large state actors, and second, a move beyond the mega-event venues on Russkyi Island and the addressing of the question of urbanism in Vladivostok itself. Unlike the situation during the 2012 summit, it is now the urban itself, both materially and in terms of policies, that is under scrutiny as it is reformulated and redrawn into a fast-track process. With Russkyi Island anticipated to function as an offshore zone as a response to U.S. economic sanctions, and considering the 2016 Russo-Japanese rapprochement (Korolev, 2016; Pajon, 2017), this worlding of processes expands and touches upon Russia’s current geopolitics.

Drawing a historical parallel, a remarkable coincidence appears: Founded as a small outpost in 1862, it took Vladivostok 26 years to become the capital of the Eastern Guberniya. One hundred years later, the city was on the verge of exiting Soviet isolation. It then took another 26 years of internationalizing for Vladivostok to be reinstated as the capital of the Far Eastern Federal District (see Figure 5.1). From this standpoint, the urban policies of the late 2010s coincided with an attempt to form international alliances. The city’s urbanity itself became instrumentalized and entered the terrain of geopolitics. Following the historic tradition of grand gestures to develop the Russian Far East, the port on the Pacific is now being asked to enhance its urbanistic discourse in order to match the mobilities of international contemporary urban policy, and thereby sufficiently and successfully perform its anticipated interregional function.
5.6. Conclusions: Convergent spaces

This chapter examines the translation of an urban policy, mega-event urban boosterism, in a peripheral setting. The analysis of the research questions posed at the outset yielded this discussion of (a) a new normative approach to the city’s urbanity, which was aligned with international urbanistic currents in the mid-2010s and has recently benefited from international cooperation; (b) cracks in the actor landscape, including the preferential treatment of young creative professionals by state structures; (c) the continuation of federal resource allocation towards further internationalization of the locality as such; and (d) fragmented material outputs. Starting with the translation of spectacular urbanization, I have suggested that the process has been tilting towards one that can be further refined and conceptualized as “spectacular fragmentation,” a term applicable to both the problematizing of the urban and the material qualities of urban space.

The selected locality went through the post-Soviet transition under circumstances that in no way encouraged the development of a local urbanistic discourse. Hosting the 2012 APEC Summit enabled a mega-event development boost intended to enhance the international profile of Vladivostok. Abundant resources were allocated to encourage agglomeration growth. The process of spectacular urbanization neither generated urban policies for renewal, which were limited to a Potemkin-like façade, nor supported new agential forces. Actor agency consisted of a fragmented, inarticulate configuration of economic elites, local governance, cronyist politics, and business as the agglomeration continued with the process of internationalization.

In this configuration, post-Soviet legacies were undergoing a process of “acquiring new meanings” (Clark and Tracey, 2004), which resulted in their becoming framed as obsolete and undesirable. The actions that underpinned the tilting of spectacular urbanization towards a contemporary urbanistic approach are inscribed in the specific moment in which urbanism was elevated into a national project. With normative approaches having secured the elevation of the Far East’s development into a national priority, raising the urbanistic discourse as part of a process of creating a contextualized urban policy became a constituent part of the internationalization of Vladivostok. This is demonstrable in a managerial twist in urban policies, a fast-tracking of urban development, the state’s favoring of creative professionals over local administration, and the appearance of international partnerships in the field of urbanism. Having preceded this latest sequence of
actions, the effect of the mega-event has been framed as a normative jump-start for a subsequent converging urbanity and an urbanism of convergence.
6. Policy knowledge: Regulatory revitalization

The second case examined in this thesis concerns the translation of a process for urban renewal into a process of contextualized policy knowledge, as observed in one example of urban revitalization. I argue that translation did not have a unidirectional character; rather, it intermeshed with existing local frameworks. To demonstrate this, the analysis is supported by four pillars: (a) The moments of normative change with regard to the specific piece of public space; (b) the changes in the landscape of involved actors; (c) the resources invested in the revitalization of the space; and (d) the physical output and its implications for the problematizing of urbanity in the selected locale.

As noted in Chapter 2, revitalization is part of the lifecycle of cities. In recent decades, however, it has become so closely linked with the notion of international urban competitiveness as to become indistinguishable from it and is often used as a synonym for gentrification. It is commonly presumed that revitalization is attained in the form of state-of-the-art materialities, which are becoming increasingly generic and de-localized in their design and aesthetics.

The focus of this chapter is a state program for urban revitalization that was launched with the objective of matching public space materialities in Russia’s regional cities with broader international trends. The chapter examines one such city. Given the historical continuities of central command over urban space in Russia, I argue that this program rather sought to correct a lag and turn the page of the post-Soviet period by once again instituting a unified approach to urbanism. The setting of this case of policy knowledge translation is Krasnoyarsk, a large city in eastern Siberia with broad outreach and ambitious elites. Urban renewal has been at the epicenter of earlier local problematizing, with which the recent state program converged. The analysis addresses changes in the character and conduct of local policies and material output as processes of the contextualization of policy knowledge. In this contextualization, urban revitalization is framed as the impetus for the formation of a regulatory urban space.
6.1. Context

6.1.1. Introducing the case

As described in Ch. 4.6, by the early 2010s, the notion of urbanism was trending in Russia’s domestic discourse. Central to this was the foundation of the Strelka Institute in Moscow. During the institute’s first stellar years, an offshoot under the name of Strelka Consulting Bureau (Strelka CB) was established and awarded several large state contracts. Strelka CB received broad publicity through the municipal program “My Street,” which addressed urban renewal in Moscow and drafted relevant policy frameworks. That program has had a striking effect on the public space of the capital city and has attracted mixed opinions from the public and the domestic scientific community. It also received international coverage.

Of interest here is the second such program and the first at the federal level, the ambitious “Federal Program for a Comfortable Urban Environment” (hereafter “CUE”; see also Ch. 5). From early on, Strelka CB was confident enough to boast about managing the “largest post-Soviet urban planning” program (Strelka, 2017a: 1), underlining its intention to draw a clear line of departure from the past and stressing the decisiveness of the political leadership of the country in drawing this line and achieving a breakthrough. This chapter therefore considers the policy mobilities associated with the program.

At a budget exceeding half a billion euros pulled from federal, regional, and municipal budgets and anticipating private contributions, Strelka CB, together with a ministerial organization created for this purpose, went on to create “comfortable urban environments” across Russia. Practically, this meant transferring the lessons learned in Moscow by addressing aspects of urban renewal (including standards for construction and public space design, zoning regulations and environmental quality indexes) in regional cities. A sub-program consisted of the implementation of 120 pilot projects in 40 cities. It was initially associated with preparations for the 2018 World Cup; following changes in the agreement with FIFA, the sub-program shifted to building a policy framework and enhancing the urbanist discourse in those cities.

One of the 40 participating cities was Krasnoyarsk. The main waterfront was selected to accommodate this pilot project. However, this was a space

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63 Blagoustroistvo is the default term used in all relevant documentation in Russian (see Ch. 3.7).
64 The Foundation for a Unified Development Institute for Housing (Фонд единого института развития в жилищной сфере (Фонд ЕИРЖС), established by the Agency for Housing Mortgage Lending (AHML).
that had already stood at the epicenter of urban renewal policies drawn at the local level. Therefore, the launch of the CUE resulted in an intermeshing of locally formulated policy landscapes with processes of knowledge transfer and translation. This interaction forms the backbone of the present analysis.

6.1.2. Historical background

Krasnoyarsk was established in 1628 at the confluence of the Yenisei and the smaller Kacha River as an advanced military point that secured the Tomsk and Kuznetsk forts from the east. By the 1720s, it had become a regional trade hub, with the Moscow tract passing through it. The first city plan was drawn in 1759. With the establishment of the Yenisei Governorate in 1822, Krasnoyarsk became an administrative center; as regional authorities settled there, it began to grow (Ogly, 1980). In the late nineteenth century, the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway triggered additional spatial and demographic growth. Now in a very advantageous location, at the intersection of the new railway and the water artery of the Yenisei, Krasnoyarsk began to take on industrial and increasingly complex economic functions. Large capital investments for the train station, depots, river port, first factories, and electrical utilities followed. The pearl of this period and a testament to the city’s extroversion was the Yenisei Railway Bridge, a fine piece of engineering that was awarded first prize at the 1900 World Exhibition in Paris.

All economic activity slowed following the events of 1917. In the early Soviet years, the new authorities withdrew the city’s status as regional capital. The following decades saw Krasnoyarsk slipping into inward development and international obscurity in the depths of central-eastern Siberia. But the natural resources surrounding it, as well as the region’s strategic position and its potential for industrial development, allowed the city to be entirely self-sufficient and to become one of the main centers for the development of Siberia’s so-called “productive forces” under the Soviet command economy.

The re-establishment of Krasnoyarsk Krai in 1934 yielded the reconstitution of the city as an administrative center, the construction of large building complexes designed by architects from Moscow and Novosibirsk, the demolition of many pre-revolutionary buildings and churches, and the foundation of regional branches of organizations such as the Union of Soviet Architects (Slabucha, 1998). The engineered razing of pre-revolutionary spatial and architectural characteristics and the advance of Soviet modernism in essence sculpted a city that, at least in some areas, approached the planners’ ideal of the city as machine.
'The process of rendering the city a giant assembly line accelerated with WWII. During the evacuation of industrial enterprises in the winter of 1941, personnel and civilians from the European part of the USSR arrived in Krasnoyarsk under emergency conditions.\textsuperscript{65} This pushed the city’s infrastructure to its limits and resulted in dramatic spatial change, with factories hurriedly placed along the river and informal settlements mushrooming near them.

By the end of the war, the city was overcrowded, had an exhausted infrastructure, and faced supply shortages. The evacuated enterprises shifted back to civilian purposes, and production continued unabated following the Stalinist dictum demanding intense development of Siberia’s productive forces. As a result, post-WWII Krasnoyarsk operated literally as an extended industrial site, with little space for the development of notions of civic life and public space other than the occasional organized commemoration and the basic interactions inherent in urban life. Heavy industrialization was, after all, initially based on the use of forced labor\textsuperscript{66} and rural immigration.

With the formation of the Angara-Yenisei TPC (see Ch. 4.6) in the 1960s, the two most powerful hydroelectric stations in the world at the time were located near Krasnoyarsk. The provision of cheap electricity allowed further industrial expansion,\textsuperscript{67} infrastructure improvements, and higher standards of living. Technological innovations and region-specific knowledge were also locally achieved with the establishment of regional academic and scientific institutions. The TPC continued to grow in the 1970s, with regional research institutes drawing programs for the expansion of industrial activity into several smaller cities. Krasnoyarsk and its surrounding area soon specialized in heavy machinery; ship repairs and construction; military, nuclear, and space technology; chemicals; pulp; and agricultural engineering, and it increasingly took a leading role in Siberia.\textsuperscript{68} The rise of infrastructure supporting polycentric spatial expansion, the opening of a new airport on the city’s outskirts, and the initiation of the construction of a subway system attested to the city’s regional outreach. This, however, was not met with concomitant internationalization: With the Cold War at its height, Krasnoyarsk – and especially its

\textsuperscript{65} Two enterprises were evacuated to Krasnoyarsk: The Lubetski factory from Moscow and the tractor factory from Zaporozhe.

\textsuperscript{66} This included forced labor on the part of German and Japanese POWs. Following de-Stalinization, voluntary campaigns were also organized.

\textsuperscript{67} For instance, the cellulose and paper plant, the aluminum factory, and the harvester factory.

\textsuperscript{68} Plants such as the Сибэлектросталь, Краслесмаш, Красмаш, Сельхоззапчасть, КРАЗ, КРАМЗ, Сибэлектросталь, Сибтяжмаш, Цветмет, and Сивинит are gradually falling into oblivion, but until recently they were a source of pride for Krasnoyarsk.
environ with their secret cities, nuclear reactors, aerospace and cosmic research, and ballistic rockets – remained hermetically closed to the world.

With the freezing of the branch economy and the Soviet military industry, the entire economy stagnated, industrial activity slowed, and the construction of the subway froze, with attempts to launch reforms and provide socio-economic support proving insufficient. Soon, the factories that had become emblematic of the industrialization of eastern Siberia started declaring bankruptcy, and their plots turned into brownfields. In the absence of any significant private capital formation at the time, they could at best be leased, and it took several years before residential and commercial uses began to sprout in such areas (see Pyle, 2011, for more information on that process). Rather, and in the absence of feasibility or traffic studies, new housing and retail appeared in formerly designated public spaces and green zones. Together with the explosion of private car ownership, this resulted in high levels of traffic, gas emissions, and parking problems, which eroded parts of the public space. The city’s general plan was thus outdated, overrun by the realities of capital accumulation. Having followed a trajectory typical of secondary Russian cities, the Krasnoyarsk of the late 1990s exhibited all of the spatial characteristics of the post-socialist transition.

6.1.3. Sociospatial attributes

The spatial characteristics of Krasnoyarsk were defined in the 20th century with development on both sides of the Yenisei, which are now connected by two railway and three automobile bridges. Krasnoyarsk is officially designated as an agglomeration that includes the airport and a number of satellite cities and small towns.

Krasnoyarsk Territory’s industrial profile is based on resource extraction and processing. This benefits the economy of the city itself, where industrial activity has nevertheless shrunk significantly. This constitutes a peculiar attribute of Krasnoyarsk: It is deindustrializing in relation to what it was and has a growing service sector, yet it remains an industrial city compared to, for example, European cities.

The attractiveness of the city goes beyond the administrative limits of the region. Apart from positive agglomeration effects and immigration from smaller cities and shrinking towns (including those in northern Siberia), Krasnoyarsk has been receiving small population inflows from neighboring regions such as Khakassia, Irkutsk, and even the Far East. Most of its population growth, however, is due to labor migration from Central Asia and the Caucasus.
In terms of spatial organization, the city center did not see many changes following the dissolution of the USSR. Extending for approximately three kilometers parallel to the Yenisei, the center hosts most office jobs, retail, and educational facilities as well as municipal and regional governmental authorities. It is quite compact, boasting a rich architectural heritage and several public spaces that are popular in the summer season. On the other hand, the historic center suffers from poor transportation planning and congestion, noise, and air pollution. On the whole, the historic center is a lively area and has retained an important role, holding symbolic value for local civic identity.
Figure 6.1. Timeline of a regulatory revitalization process. The lines highlight central moments in the history of urban renewal in Krasnoyarsk from post-Soviet inertia until the second half of the 2010s, when new meanings, materialities, and notions of space and place came into play. (Drawn by author)
6.2. Pledging of resources

6.2.1. Planning a global city

Following the anomalies of the 1990s, the urban and regional economy gradually rebounded. Krasnoyarsk began reaping the benefits of its role as the designated capital of a large, well-endowed region, essentially serving as central-eastern Siberia’s main administrative center. During the 2000s, the growth of the resource-based economy, the federal investments in regional infrastructure, a growing construction industry, the young banking and credit systems, the increase in recreation, the service sector, and consumer goods consumption, as well as the informal sector, contributed to Krasnoyarsk’s becoming a relatively wealthy Russian city with a growing middle class. Likewise, the few individuals who were strategically positioned in terms of Perestroika-era industrial assets managed to amass considerable resources and power at the federal and also international levels. Oligarchs who became internationally known in the 2000s, such as Deripaska, Potanin, and Prokhorov, all, to a greater or lesser extent, made their fortunes by means of their associations with industrial enterprises located, among others, in Krasnoyarsk Territory. The city has also been home to ambitious local elites. Based in the geographical center of Russia’s landmass, these elites have imagined turning Krasnoyarsk into the main Siberian metropolis beyond the “old” European Russia, often perceived and depicted as morally exhausted and economically dependent on resources extracted in “their” Siberia.

With a population that officially exceeded one million in 2013, Krasnoyarsk has been among Russia’s fastest-growing large cities. It has surpassed several cities in European Russia and is today the twelfth largest in the country. Third to Novosibirsk and Omsk, Krasnoyarsk could, at least according to visionary local researchers, even take the lead in eastern Russia in the coming decades. While it is true that Krasnoyarsk has been faring much better than stagnating Omsk, however, it is difficult to imagine it outperforming Novosibirsk in the near future. That view, nonetheless, is illustrative of the dynamism of eastern Siberia and demonstrative of local aspirations for becoming part of a global community.69

Outsiders may not be able to conceive how an almost unheard-of city could claim a global presence, but this is indeed the case. Krasnoyarsk is not only a hub for the extraction and processing industry of eastern Siberia; it is

69 The studies published by the “Foresight Center” [Center for Strategic Research and Development] hosted at the Siberian Federal University bring this vision forward (see, for example, Efimov et al., 2012, 2014; Uss et al., 2013).
also strategically located at the convergence of the Trans-Siberian Railway, the federal highway, and the Yenisei, whose navigable waters lead to the Arctic Sea. In the absence of other large cities nearby, it follows that the territorial reach of the city is literally global. This reach, then, explains the bold visions of this city’s future. In that aspect, Krasnoyarsk is an excellent case of an ordinary (as in Amin and Graham, 1997) but also a globalizing city (as in Kraetke, 2014a, 2014b). It is a city in which local political and economic elites would, after its recovery in the 2000s, seek the necessary instruments to enhance the city’s image and international reach.

These grand aspirations are clear in the regional “Project Krasnoyarsk 2020,” submitted by Moscow’s GIPROGOR in cooperation with regional planning organizations. The project envisioned the formulation, by 2020, of an agglomeration extending to a radius of about 50 kilometers, with a combined population of approximately 1.3 million that would be supported by new housing construction, ambitious transportation projects, a global hub of logistics, a stock exchange for non-ferrous metals, and a world-class recreational complex, and thus constitute a new geo-economic cluster in eastern Siberia. Adding a messianic touch, Project Krasnoyarsk 2020 conveyed that, by implementing this “super-task,” the city would “enhance the development of Siberia as a platform of Russian civilization; and save Russian people by suggesting new ways of life, sustainable and spiritual development for the 21st century” (Tsaryov et al., 2011: 616). That, however, would necessitate a mechanism for attracting private and federal investments. Hence, and as in the case of the 2012 APEC Summit, megaprojects and PPPs were viewed as the vehicles that would achieve this: It comes as no surprise, then, that organizing an international mega-event was suggested for Krasnoyarsk.

Published in 2008, the Project Krasnoyarsk 2020 is the product of an era of optimism in which Russia was looking outwards and joining international organizations. In 2013, as a result of the efforts of regional elites, the city was in fact assigned a mega-event: The 2019 Universiade. This signified the expansion of “the geography of sports megaprojects outside the European part of the country” (Ministry of Sport of the Russian Federation, 2018: 55). The Universiade yielded the investment, during the mid-2010s, of the equivalent of approximately one billion euros for sports facilities, transportation,
URBAN POLICIES FOR A CONTEMPORARY PERIPHERY

and further urban infrastructure, including projects that had remained on paper for decades, such as the fifth bridge over the Yenisei.

All in all, the early 2010s saw the peak of local expectations for the much-desired internationalization. Painfully paradoxically, this peak was of no avail, as it soon coincided with Russia’s deepest lows in its relations with the West after 2014-15: While the Siberian city was preparing to introduce itself as a *globalizing* city, it was also becoming apparent that Russia’s increasing isolation would limit the internationalizing effect.

### 6.2.2. Achieving a good city

The visions for showcasing a globalizing Krasnoyarsk grew out of a period in which considerable changes were taking place. Such were the urban densification and the formulation of a local real estate market in the 2000s. The young market economy promised, and to some extent made possible, the satisfaction of new housing and consumption needs, one of them being the choice of a comparatively well-off segment of the population for urban living. This was manifested in the construction of entire housing quarters on reclaimed brownfield areas very close to the city center. There, and for the first time after the Soviet period, as an expert proudly emphasized, the urban design and aesthetic principles that were adopted followed:

> the typical European model […], not the one where we build taller buildings to cut down costs […]. We said that this should not happen in this project, we should promote quality over quantity. The client agreed, and it worked […] absolutely, the apartments are all occupied, they were all sold (Interview 31).

These developments were significant in establishing a new optimism and suggesting novel urban lifestyles to meet the needs of this emerging middle class. By the late 2000s, then, this segment was moving in fairly central locations and purchasing residential quarters of “European” quality. Parallel to this, the unification of the city’s institutes of higher education under the new, well-endowed SFU helped Krasnoyarsk attract a large student population from Siberia’s regional hinterland. Those elements combined – that is, the rise of a local middle class and an influx of students – provided a boost to the city center. The 2010s saw the appearance and expansion of fashionable urban recreation, retail, and consumption activities that catered mainly to this new Siberian urban middle class as well as to affluent groups associated with state structures and industrial conglomerates. Fast changes also struck the uses and attributes inherited from the Soviet and post-Soviet periods:
Outdated retail, street kiosks, survival entrepreneurship, aggressive advertising, communal dining areas, and the like have been gradually replaced.

6.2.3. The quest for revitalization

While the private sector was effectively producing both the housing and the consumption infrastructure necessary to accommodate socioeconomic change in the city center, there had been no such equivalent in the materialities of central public spaces. These were in very poor condition after almost a quarter of a century of municipal inaction. While the historic center increasingly possessed the features of a downtown or even a central business district, the same area was run-down, traffic-ridden, and perceived as unsafe at night. Improved household incomes were at odds with the realities of a shoddily maintained, rough public space. Both the new middle class and the city’s youth stood uncomfortably among Soviet-dated textures. For the city administration, this discrepancy either did not exist or did not need to be addressed or prioritized.

Therefore, while Krasnoyarsk’s elites were drawing bold plans and envisioning the city becoming global, the city center itself was struggling with accumulating inertia in ways of arranging public space, landscaping, and “doing” urbanism. The first generation of a market-oriented urban middle class could not project the urban lifestyles that corresponded to it. Slowing things further, the city elicited no interest on the part of the regional elites; the main figures associated with Siberian industrial enterprises usually reside in European Russia or abroad. Holders of such great wealth do not invest here […] They don’t see the city as their own, they don’t love it. There are plenty of really rich people in the city. They buy apartments, renovate them, spend like it’s nothing. They buy apartments in London, then leave the city altogether […]. They see the city as a resource. (Interview 30)

The meager municipal resources invested in public spaces contrasted with the profile of the city as a regional leader, while the materialities of the urban space had not been attuned to the presence of new socioeconomic groups and the local middle class. This is also evident in the long history of debate over the city’s public spaces and their arrangement, functions, and aesthetics.
Likewise, the embankment, an emblematic public space on the left side of the Yenisei, has been subject to several attempts at renewal and has received the attention of municipal authorities, civic actors, experts, and planning institutes. It was in one of these discussions that the CUE was announced, promising the transformation of an important public space in the city. In March 2017, the city administration proudly announced that an initial sum of 152 million rubles (approximately 2.3 million EUR according to late 2016 exchange rates) would be allocated to the reconstruction of the embankment. The financing of a specific, designated revitalization project from joint federal and regional budgets was a novelty, as were the preconditions and managing framework that accompanied it. These novelties came to match existing municipal normative frameworks, as expanded upon in the following part.

6.3. Dynamic normative change

6.3.1. A civic space

Running along the historic center and facing the Yenisei, the main waterfront functions as the city’s main civic space. A long chain of events, festivities, and organized commemorations illustrates the stability of this function over time. It is, for example, at the embankment that the municipality holds official public events, sports activities, seasonal gardening and planting actions, chess tournaments, and bike festivals; even political acts are staged there. It is also there that the governor, regional and municipal authorities, and employees meet for the traditional subotnik to demonstrate their dedication to the city.

In addition, this is a popular recreational area: Throughout the 2000s, the unregulated street-level entrepreneurship, an indispensable feature of post-Soviet urban life, flourished in the form of summer cafes and grill restaurants operating without constraints along the Yenisei. The embankment has also

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71 The Russian term is набережная, a word that can mean embankment, riverfront, or waterfront. With the terms “embankment” and “main waterfront” here, I refer to the central part of the left bank of the Yenisei, along the city center. In the local context, this is also referred to as simply “набережная”. This also inscribes the centrality of the specific section in the civic consciousness, as opposed to the embankment on the right bank (which is referred to as “правобережная (набережная)”), i.e. the right-side embankment. I also use the term “waterfront” to describe a stretch that is longer than the central embankment.

72 Subotnik is the term used for a day of volunteer work. Instituted in the early Soviet years, it included cleaning the streets, taking care of public amenities, and performing other community services. In their present form, subotniki are seasonal meetings with a rather symbolic role that demonstrate collective spirit and are conducted by members of municipal departments and other state institutions. As a rule, they take place towards the end of April.
hosted acts of religious commemoration, with the clergy and political authorities occasionally marching through it, as well as political events, such as a rally on the occasion of the 2008 Russo-Georgian War or the celebration of Russian Flag Day. Spontaneous events also take place there, as in the case of public mourning for the shopping mall tragedy in neighboring Kemerovo in March 2018. Most recently, municipal departments have successfully run a multitude of organized festivals along the river, both in the summer and winter seasons.

The symbolic meaning assigned to this space is so rich and uninterrupted in time that it can be described as a solid, immovable characteristic: It has been established as an emblematic civic space in the public consciousness, hosting the expressions of a civic identity in eastern Siberia. Over the fluctuations of the post-Soviet period, these expressions have been multifaceted yet stable in locational choice, centered along the river. As a result, the embankment, with its approximately two-kilometer length along the Yenisei and the old city, has diverse uses.

### 6.3.2. An imagined space

Despite – or perhaps because – of its high visibility, centrality, and symbolic value, the embankment has been the subject of many ideas regarding how it should look and what functions it can formally accommodate. These conceptualizations were integrated in a series of legislative measures introduced from the late 2000s until the launch of the CUE in 2016.

For the most part, the 2000s went by with frequent, usually inconclusive discussions among municipal authorities, the police, the architects’ council, other experts, and the general public, on topics such as the provision of parking spaces near the embankment or the construction of a hotel complex at the city’s nearby main square. This period also saw the first discussions and conflicts with the small entrepreneurs operating summer kiosks, whom the city administration began confronting legally in order to limit their presence. The main aim of the authorities was to minimize the trading of alcohol in the public space and to preserve an appropriate, decent character along the river.

The discussion on the state of the embankment, appropriate landscaping, and the uses that should be promoted along its length has been quite rich. In the Krasnoyarsk 2020 project, the main waterfront was approached as an

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73 This refers to the landscaped part of the waterfront that has historically been associated with civic activity in this city – not the entire length of it; the administrative borders of Krasnoyarsk stretch along both sides of the Yenisei for tens of kilometers.
element that needed to be protected and used as a center of civic life. The removal of the remaining industrial premises, instituted during the Soviet period, was foreseen within the scope of the overall urban renewal, with the goal of introducing recreational and consumption activities among the green surfaces extending along the Yenisei.

At the turn of the 2010s, the municipal architecture department and local experts sought to specify these guidelines and form a concrete revitalization proposal. A design competition was held to help determine the future of the city’s main waterfront (City of Krasnoyarsk, 2011). In the context of this competition and the discourse surrounding it, interesting views were expressed, revealing a longing for this civic space not only to remain civic, but to acquire qualities and materialities that the city entirely lacked. Such was the case of an architect who had just returned from a visit in Copenhagen and had been impressed:

We sure lack their mentality. All life here passes in anticipation of summer and trips to warm regions. We hardly live; we just sit home and wait. Maybe this project will take us out of this state, maybe people will begin to love their city. (“Virus liubvi”, 2011)

Similarly, a representative of a local civic organization hoped that the project would provide quality public spaces where pedestrians could be “closer to nature, to the Yenisei […] In Paris, the Seine embankment is equipped for people, people sit everywhere. We do not have such opportunities” (“S vidom na Yenisei”, 2011b). Coming from both experts and non-experts, such statements that make use of examples from Western cities demonstrate a longing for something different, something situated in a specific geographic elsewhere that is the Western metropolis – either imposing in its historic grandeur or hip and contemporary.

For the design competition, local architectural teams drafted design proposals and presented them at the municipal Department of Architecture. The underlying idea was to divide the waterfront into thematic zones which were to be developed in phases. Each of these zones would have a different role, but all would be free for people to use and enjoy, underlining the importance of utilizing public space for sports and leisure purposes. In this imagined space, the presence of summer cafes, now clearly classified as harmful to the city’s image, was restricted. These ideas were complemented by a research project report by Krasnoyarskgrazhdanproekt, the regional research institute for urban and regional development. In this work, the institute
proposed the transformation of the entire left bank into a zone for sports and recreation, stretching for several kilometers along the north–south axis and thus radically altering the austere industrial city to create a green, leisure-friendly one.

This discussion was also integral in the process of drafting the city’s new General Plan. Prepared by Krasnoyarskgrazhdanproekt and Moscow’s GIPROGOR, the final 2015 document emphasized, among other things, the need for Krasnoyarsk to adopt principles of sustainable development. These included the conversion of brownfields on the riverfront into recreational and residential territories and the promotion of pedestrian walkways along the river. Here, as in the Krasnoyarsk 2020 project, the embankments are described as elements that “emphasize” the beauty of Krasnoyarsk. As such, they are expected to undergo a “comprehensive improvement” in the near future (City of Krasnoyarsk, 2015).

However, not only municipal and regional approaches sought to address the public space materialities. Land use densification under a market economy had meant that the city’s main open public space along the Yenisei functioned as a magnet for private interests seeking to capitalize on the area’s locational advantages and popularity. The expression of such interests took various forms and ran parallel to the municipal and expert vision of attaining an open, recreational public space.

6.3.3. A contested space

The beginnings of the conflictual relationship among municipal, civic, and private views of the embankment can be traced back to the early 2000s and the dubious plan to construct a cinema complex, the Galeria Yenisei, which promised to become the largest entertainment center in Siberia. Thereby, an overly ambitious project took off—and in an area that was not designated for it. The permit for the construction of the complex was approved by the city’s chief architect and the head of the municipal urban planning council in violation of land use rules. However, this was not uncommon; such things occurred often in that period, notably in several cases of the issuing of shopping mall construction permits. Nonetheless, the Galeria Yenisei project was frozen for a number of reasons; it resumed almost a decade later and opened in 2014. For several years, the unfinished construction site dotted the waterfront, reflecting the normative limbo of the post-Soviet period.

The 2011-12 revitalization project froze as well. Despite the unanimous support of the municipal authorities and experts as well as the public exhibition of project proposals and the lively public discourse around them,
the project was rejected by the regional government on the basis of lack of funds. This ambiguity went hand in hand with the continuation of private aggression. Characteristic was the case of a developer who, without having been granted a permit of any kind, fenced a plot and began excavation works, apparently to construct two high-rise residential buildings with panoramic views to the river. Works were suspended; a permit was somehow obtained, but construction was frozen indefinitely. A similar case of private interests pressing for land use change has been that of the final approval for a permit for two hotel buildings in the heart of the city center near the waterfront, five years after its initial rejection and a long process of negotiations that received much public attention. Likewise, there was public outrage in 2015 over the obscure transfer of land use rights to another private company that planned to erect two multistory buildings directly on the waterfront.\footnote{This incident involved the mayor and the company that was constructing the hotel complex and Universiade facilities. Responding to public expressions of discontent, the mayor defended the agreement, claiming that the investors would create a park. City council deputies appealed to the regional prosecutor as there were indications that this was merely a pretext and that the extensive real estate project would in fact destroy the public function of large part of the waterfront. Shortly thereafter, the agreement was terminated.}

These incidents and the hype that surrounded them indicate a strong interest on the part of private, undisclosed, or other actors to gain access to the main waterfront, which they all saw as a desirable piece of real estate. The city’s reactions to these actors have been diverse and, on occasion, conflicting: At times containing, at others rejecting or approving plans, starting with the dubious permit for the construction of the cinema complex in the early 2000s.

In summary, from the 2000s onwards, we can see three competing forces along the main waterfront: Civic, municipal, and private. As a historically established main public space, the area retained its diverse civic function but also attained prime locational value in the early market economy. This resulted in a clash in the 2000s, with market forces seeking to commercialize public space at the expense of public non-commercial uses or small entrepreneurship. We can also discern a set of sociocultural norms, an array of municipal and regional legislative and executive powers, and waves of private attempts to capitalize on the former and manipulate the latter. The existing normative framework proved insufficient to reconcile these elements and to suggest a synthesis on the basis of a shared vision that would both cover civic needs and satisfy private interests without bending to the latter. The post-Soviet period concluded with a solid normative framework for the physical transformation of the embankment and the uses that it should attract in a city
that claimed regional leadership and global appeal but had yet to develop a decent public space.

It was the launch of the CUE in 2016 that functioned as a catalyst for this development as well as for the shifting of urban policies. Moreover, as had happened in Moscow, the program was essentially part of a broader process of writing a social contract between the state and the new urban middle class and applying it across the periphery. In Krasnoyarsk, this task fell to several actors who were to navigate the implementation of the program through conditions specific to the city. The deeds of the most central of these actors are the subject of the next section.

6.4. Actor–contestants

6.4.1. Working toward a new waterfront

During the 2010s, under a new mayoral figure who sought to demonstrate managerial capabilities, the municipal authority began seeking to forge PPPs to manage public space. The main waterfront was among the terrains on which these managerial policies started unfolding early in the 2010s. The policies were articulated around the visions outlined in the (2008) Project Krasnoyarsk 2020, the (2010-11) municipal competition, and the (2015) General Plan, all of which envisioned a revitalized embankment appropriate for eastern Siberia’s largest city. Those actions sought to alter the civic role and the materiality of this space.

From his first days in office in 2012, the mayor had spoken of a waterfront that should be free of inappropriate practices such as drinking alcohol, smoking, grilling, and playing loud music and should be turned into a healthy, sports-friendly area. Gradually, a specific perception of which behaviors and cultural expressions were appropriate became central to the public discourse: From reporting on which summer cafe along the Yenisei served the tastiest shashlik, the local media switched within a decade to condemning such services as vulgar and inappropriate. This perception had been dominant in the municipal project for the landscaping and unification of the entire waterfront but had been slow to materialize. Fragments of municipal action pushing this new vision were primarily preventive, pursuing such businesses and imposing limitations on their operation.

The quest for a wholesome embankment intensified with the appearance of a municipal actor, the Department for Sport (Krasport). Krasport was assigned the establishment of recreational areas in public spaces in the whole of Krasnoyarsk, including the main waterfront. Specific actions started with
the activation, in late 2014, of the municipal Directorate for Sports, Tourism, and Youth Policy. An auction for the establishment of a recreation park in the southern section of the waterfront was announced. This section would be managed by the Municipal Autonomous Institution “Center for Sports Clubs” (CSC). Soon after, the management of another section with a length of about one kilometer, owned partly by the city and partly by the Federal Property Management Agency, was transferred to Krasport. One of the declared goals was to continue the “attack” on bad habits. Krasport’s tasks were extended and prescribed in a municipal three-year program for the development of physical education, sports, and tourism. Krasport consequently invited investors to launch small businesses offering such amenities as sunbathing deck rentals and boat rentals and assigned the task of managing parts of the waterfront to the CSC.

The CSC started turning this section into a “recreation park” by implementing interventions and seeking to involve private–municipal partnerships in the effort. In 2016, areas for exercise were arranged, sports equipment and a running track appeared, bike lanes were repainted, and sand was delivered to create space for beach sports. Summer deck chairs for rent appeared on the new wooden deck, followed by the construction of a small kiosk. In that scheme, CSC was not only assigned the operational management but also managed these small businesses until investors appeared. Another transfer of a plot from federal to municipal ownership followed in the summer of 2018, the management of which was assigned to CSC. A small-scale but thorough commercialization of a substantial part of the waterfront thus took place between 2015 and 2018. The CSC was also assigned the management of the section that would be reconstructed as part of the CUE.

In all of these attempts to form PPPs, in name if not in practice, the underlying aim was to gradually turn the main waterfront into a salubrious public space. A similar logic underlay the organization of ISKRA, a youth contest run by the city in the second half of the 2010s. This program was launched to allow the city’s young creatives to suggest the appearance of new urban furniture on public space and thus to propose new materialities in the city’s public space, including the main waterfront. Indeed, several objects appeared along it, but these were individual pieces of urban furniture rather than a comprehensive landscaping. Nonetheless, such gestures reveal a certain kind of agency developed by municipal authorities, similar to what Olds termed “interscalar strategy” (2002), in their effort to re-conceptualize and re-articulate external globalization processes.
The same vision for a healthy waterfront became pronounced in cultural events, the most characteristic of which has been the Art-Bereg festival. As Krasnoyarsk’s core summer event, the Art-Bereg festival has introduced a rich, diverse set of festivities to the public space. In addition, one of the main successes credited to this festival has been the clearing of the embankment from what organizers described as “uncultured people” (“My pomogaem…”, 2018). A similar intention underlay the various municipal actions against the presence of young people engaging in undesired activities such as parking their cars there, obstructing the public space in front of the Yenisei, listening to loud music, and smoking next to their cars. To the municipal authorities, such practices were “foreign to our Siberian, Krasnoyarsk culture” (“Krasnoyartsam eto ne nuzhno!””, 2018).

The mid-2010s, then, saw a large-scale, combined municipal and private effort—not to attract the public to the waterfront (there was no need for this, in any case, as it has always been popular) but to change the composition of this public, to remove certain public behaviors and promote others, often-times at a small fee, partially privatizing the public space. The new public was to be the city’s new middle class, with a series of semi-privatized structures catering to its needs. This was the audience behind the designation of public spaces set forth in the 2008 regional project, the 2010-11 architectural competition, and the 2015 General Plan.

These gestures sought to address the mismatch between materialities in the city center and the new social and economic realities described above. They also sought to encourage and accommodate the arrival, at the city’s most popular public space, of “desirable” socioeconomic groups. These included, first, the family-oriented middle class, which was expected to be able to pay a small fee to use the ice-skating ring or to take a short cruise along the Yenisei. Second was the student community, but not all of it, since young people exhibiting behaviors deemed inappropriate would be excluded. The “uncivilized” presence of kiosks selling alcohol or grilling meat was also to be eliminated. The idea was to form a public space along the river accommodating the healthy, family-oriented lifestyles that the aspiring capital of Siberia deserved.

6.4.2. Novel tasks and expectations

With the onset of the CUE, municipal authorities across the country encountered novel challenges. The words of ministers, mayors, architectural theorists, foreign consultants, and engineering professionals delineated the path which actors in secondary cities were to follow, in accordance with
presidential addresses (Putin, 2016). New buzzwords flooded the news: Public spaces of high quality, participatory processes, improving the existing instead of building more, were prescribed. Pilot projects, such as for standardizing urban design (“Goroda ChM-2018 ...”, 2016) were launched. In short, local actors were expected to administer urban space in a way fundamentally different from the usual one, following Moscow’s example (Men, 2016). In particular, the sub-program for the renewal of main public spaces prescribed the provision of new materialities by bringing in young, less established landscape designers and giving them free rein to landscape and redesign individual plots in each city. Local policy professionals and municipal actors were expected to facilitate the creation of something concrete, modern and aesthetically pleasing by also initiating and accommodating public discussions and by monitoring the execution of the projects in question.

In Krasnoyarsk, the promised assistance from Strelka CB in the form of technical expertise and management tools was welcome. Apart from resources, local actors saw in the CUE a window opening to international urbanism. City officials interpreted this as an opportunity to raise effectiveness and quality standards. Krasnoyarsk was, after all, a city where “every year we are presented with a dozen new nice squares and after a few months everything starts breaking down” (“Kakie parki…”, 2013) and in which a desire to attain modern-looking parks and public spaces was well inscribed in local discourses. Everyone from the mayor to municipal committees had repeatedly acknowledged that there was something missing in the city’s policies, with outdated approaches to landscaping and revitalization; however, there appeared to be no answer as to what it was that was missing. Admittedly, the absence of creative-minded personnel from municipal structures contributed to this awkwardness, while in Moscow “the capital’s architects are already on track to achieve comfort” (“Pochemu vlasti tak meldenno…”, 2015). The overall conclusion of these arguments was that, if Krasnoyarsk really was to become an attractive metropolis in Siberia, people actually had to want to live there, and this was in fact not quite the case, as many honest self-reflections reveal.

Upon the program launch, however, the mayor appeared confident in his knowledge of what needed to be done. Following the program’s guidelines, public discussions and an online survey were organized in order to allow people to decide which public space should be landscaped. In its promotional

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75 In the original: yom. Literally, this is closer to “coziness.”
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material and publications, Strelka CB painted a rosy picture of local authorities, architects, and the public deciding collectively (as in Strelka, 2017c: 14). Far from Moscow, though, a young practitioner who was taking part in the program had a different perspective and was skeptical about the overall rationale behind Strelka CB’s actions, stressing that:

they [Strelka] wanted to do this on their own and promote themselves, they chose not to do it together with the administration. It was a choice [...] They selected 40 cities across the country – who knows on what criteria, and they allocated funds to 40 projects, and they have been expanding since then. (Interview 21)

In Krasnoyarsk, and perhaps not accidentally, the mayor announced his visions for the embankment even before the public hearings were over, which dissatisfied regional authorities. The city had announced the area’s reconstruction at federal expenses more than three months ahead of these discussions. Evidently, then, the public hearings had little if any impact on an already fixed decision, regardless of what Strelka CB’s materials wished to communicate.

Notwithstanding the facts surrounding the decision-making process, the main waterfront was about to change as part of the CUE. The purifying forces of contemporary landscape design were set to unfold at a total length of five kilometers along the Yenisei. This arrangement changed, however, after preliminary discussions. The main actors, including the architect who was assigned the design project, proposed dividing the project into phases as it would be impossible to reconstruct the entire length with the funds provided by the CUE. The proposal was accepted. Other local experts expressed doubt about meeting the deadlines, while the complex ownership status of the area raised additional concerns about the success of the project.

The preparations for the 2019 Universiade added pressure; they placed additional tasks before the municipal structures, along with high expectations and the responsibilities that came with the planning of the mega-event and the management of the resources allocated to it. Setting the bar even higher in his guest talk at the 2016 Moscow Urban Forum, the mayor primed his audience for a successful Universiade as well as the real possibility of the globalization of the city on the Yenisei.

In the following year, Putin visited Krasnoyarsk to inspect the progress of works on the Universiade facilities. On that occasion, he spoke of the CUE, essentially portraying it as the state’s answer to a “rightful” public demand
for a city worth living in. Reflecting on the reality, however, a local professional would posit that:

the city is suffering tremendously from traffic jams. And the Universiade seems like a lost opportunity. [...] Of course, they pave streets, they replace the asphalt and so on, but this is superficial; you can’t compare it to what should be done. (Interview 31)

This negative evaluation points to the absence of policy knowledge at the agglomeration level but also regarding small-scale interventions. With time running short for the Universiade, improvement works went horribly wrong along the city’s main street. The mayor, whose leadership had brought not only public indignation but the discontent of his superiors, had failed to complete tasks, to steer public works such as the main street improvement or to enhance the public participation as prescribed by the CUE. However, poor mayoral performance in managing new policy knowledge was not a feature specific to Krasnoyarsk; rather, it was observed across the country: In his address to local authorities when evaluating the progress of the CUE, Putin warned of inconsiderate behaviors that failed the peoples’ expectations of achieving a high-quality urban environment. Specifically because of his poor performance (Interview 27) in late 2017, the mayor of Krasnoyarsk was dismissed and replaced by the Minister of Transport of the Krasnoyarsk Krai. The stage was now open to new actors, who were expected to be efficient and to act upon citizens’ interests, as prescribed by the state leadership.

6.4.3. The arrival of the urbanists

Although the relevant infrastructure—for example, local and regional fairs, congresses, and forums – already existed in Krasnoyarsk, the mid-2010s saw an increase in interest in urbanism that brought together artists, architects, designers, entrepreneurs, and curators. With no strong ties but also no objections to municipal structures, these people constituted the city’s community of creatives. Anton Shatalov, for example, an urban designer working for the regional institute for urban and territorial planning (Krasnoyarskgrazhdanproekt), was active in public affairs and vocal on matters relating to the city’s urban development; he was among the figures that stood out in relevant events.

76 “Residents of Krasnoyarsk expect not only modern sports facilities […], they rightfully hope that the urban environment will become more comfortable and safe” (“Prezident Rossii….”, 2017).
77 “Some pretended to take into account the opinion of people, thus showing obvious disrespect, even disdain towards citizens. […] Such a bureaucratic attitude will certainly not bring any result – neither in landscaping nor in gaining the trust of citizens.” (Putin, 2017)
The launch of the CUE led to the further ascent of the young planner. Together with a group of other architects and designers, he formed a new company, signed contracts, and began formally cooperating with Strelka CB on the landscaping designs. It was in that period that considerable knowledge transfer took place, first on paper and then on the ground. Following extensive media coverage of the CUE, Shatalov established himself as one of the main actors undertaking the task of reconstruction of the embankment.

Having been vocal on city affairs long before the CUE took place, the young planner had also advocated for a new approach to urban renewal. Shortly before the mayor’s dismissal, he and other creative young practitioners had been calling for the adoption of new policies: A reduction of car traffic in the city center, the provision of parking spaces for pay, street and pavement designs benefitting pedestrians, and the aesthetic improvement of public spaces, rather than simply paving new asphalt and replacing tiles. These were outdated practices, insisted the group of experts, that were incompatible with creating a modern urban environment. Following the fiasco that led to the mayor’s dismissal, works on the main street resumed, with an attentive, contemporary urbanistic approach now put into practice. In the reworking and replacement of tiles that took place at frenetic speed in the last weeks before the winter of 2018 set in, the young planner’s design approach and technical proposals for the renewal works on the main street were adopted, his designs were also materializing along the river.

The delivery of the reconstructed embankment to the public signaled the fulfilment of the local programs that had been prescribed a few years earlier. For the first time, a new setting was at hand. It set the stage for the establishment of a different approach to public spaces that was being incorporated in the process of a local translation of policy knowledge formation.

6.5. Translation outputs

6.5.1. A regulative space

The “creation of a modern living environment” appeared to start bearing fruit, at least in the central, emblematic public spaces of the city, short before the Universiade 2019. Together with Strelka CB, local actors had meticulously designed the waterfront, equipping it with novel, luxurious provisions such as a lift, mobile phone charging benches, and heated public toilets. This newly landscaped section of public space was waiting to be instrumentalized and to

78 These included specifications of the paving slabs to be used and the species of trees to be planted, new rules for parking, new lighting, and custom-designed outdoor furniture.
offer a background against which local authorities would now apply their new attitude towards the city and its people. In the words of the president, that literally meant:

not to hide in office rooms, not to be afraid of dialogue with people—to meet, honestly and openly talk with people, support their initiatives, especially when it comes to issues such as landscaping […] and the creation of a modern living environment. (Putin, 2016)

The new mayor was indeed quick to follow. In sharp contrast to his predecessor and from day one in office, Sergei Eremin zealously embodied the role of an official acting with transparency. Inasmuch as his predecessor sought to revitalize the main waterfront by adopting managerial policies and forging PPP schemes, the new mayor was much better prepared to undertake the role of the active, entrepreneurial official who would bring that same task to completion: The transformation of the embankment into a popular middle-class destination.

Soon after assuming his new post, the mayor began to make frequent visits next to the Yenisei, where he would praise the quality of the renewed public space and encourage citizens to adopt active, healthy lifestyles and change their attitudes toward public spaces. He went on to actively demonstrate the new attitude that he wished to support. The first mayor to create a personal account on social media, he started cycling across the city, casually strolling along the Yenisei, and feeding the ducks and posting about it on Instagram. The contrast between this novel persona and the city – a polluted, traffic-ridden, former industrial powerhouse – was immense. But from this idyllic, renewed urban landscape, the mayor went on to break with the outdated ways to conduct city affairs. A new term appeared in public discourse: Attaining stolichnost would signify Krasnoyarsk’s acquisition of the material urbanity and characteristics of a capital city.79 And “if Krasnoyarsk is to become a capital city, we must understand that this implies citizen participation” (“Krasnoyartsam predlozhat…”, 2018). The mayor thus sought to frame the new, pro-active and positive attitudes as constituent of a forward-looking Krasnoyarsk. By making this association, he implied a break with individualistic mindsets and provincial, secluded attitudes. The latter were to blame, after all, for the abandonment of public space in the post-Soviet period. By choosing to frame individualistic attitudes towards public space as an attribute of the post-Soviet idiosyncrasy, the mayor demarcated that era as having

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79 In the original: столичность. It was used to underline a departure from provinciality.
had a negative impact on the urban environment. At the same time, and perhaps more importantly, in doing so he framed it as part of the bygone past.

The mayor also instrumentalized the newly landscaped area by using it as a platform for educating his subordinates: He held an open-air city council meeting there, discussed the failures of the CUE, urged officials to improve public spaces in their districts and to start caring “for the city as you would care for your apartment” (“Mer Krasnoyarska…”, 2018). One of the novel policies was the introduction of the “hour of landscaping”, which was intended to drive officials out of their offices to address issues of land use and high-quality landscaping in the area. On the occasion of a seminar organized for officials and experts from other regional cities and towns, the mayor took his guests for a walk along the renewed embankment to show them how public spaces in their own towns and cities should look. Later, and with temperatures near zero degrees, the mayor again ordered the entire city council out of their offices to meet in the open space and inspect ongoing municipal works, stressing that they must all change their attitudes toward public space.

Following the implementation of the CUE, then, the new materialities were utilized in a novel way and acquired a new symbolic meaning. From a space paved and decorated rather simply, with the unfinished Galeria Yenisei cinema complex, a monument to the loose post-Soviet legal framework occupying a part of it, the main waterfront literally became a model, a tangible reference point for how public space in Krasnoyarsk should look. This occurred at the initiative of the mayor, who from his first day in office engaged in “mayoral brand politics” (Pasotti, 2010 in McCann, 2017: 324) while at the same time conducting formal politics conforming to specific presidential statements.

The piece-by-piece commercialization of a section of the embankment by the semi-privatized structure of the CSC (see Ch. 6.4.1) had been initiated before the CUE. These were small steps involving the investment of small municipal funds towards insignificant material changes. It seemed as if the main intention was to create spaces for pay, not to improve them. After the first phase of the CUE was concluded, however, qualitative and quantitative changes took place: Generous private sponsorships for public space improvements, either in the form of simple beautification or more extensive revitalization, were announced following the new governor’s initiative ahead of the Universiade. Such partnerships were agreed upon with the main indus-

80 In the original: час благоустройства (“Mer Krasnoyarska ustroil…”, 2018).
trial groups of Krasnoyarsk Territory, including Rusal and NorNickel. The latter pledged to finance, among other projects, the landscaping of the second section of the embankment.

Subsequently, a mechanism for financing further renewal works from joint federal and private sources was established. The role of the CSC was enhanced, as was that of young creative professionals. Making use of the experience accumulated so far from the CUE, a municipal program for the right bank of the Yenisei based on co-financing was launched. Works would be financed by federal funds and additional private sponsorship sought by the city. Drafted by the regional design and research institute and with the participation of several local architectural offices, the landscaping of the remainder of the waterfront was put on track: The ensuing new materiality was utilized as a background by the regional leadership, with the new governor arranging an outdoor interview during which he would walk along the newly landscaped section and speak of Krasnoyarsk becoming the best city in Siberia. Hence, the revitalization works made it possible to highlight the association of coming prosperity with new urban materialities. In the same vein, newly landscaped public space provided an opportunity for additional sets of actions. Parallel to the new mayor’s development of the persona described above, municipal services finally managed to restrict the access of cars to the embankment. Police officers on stylish bicycles patrolled along the Yenisei, while other officers started raids on young drivers and prosecuted persons selling smoke products under the pretext of drug dealing. A proposal for a complete ban on smoking on the waterfront was also drafted. All the above became possible only after the completion of urban renewal works and the provision of new materialities: The latter seems to have necessitated the enhanced policing of the landscaped area. Indeed, minor acts of vandalism against elements such as the new urban furniture received extensive media coverage and were described as utterly antisocial behaviors. The use of CCTV and stricter policing was advocated against such acts. Therefore, and in addition to having served as the reference point for new urban policies, the new waterfront could now assist the municipal authorities in launching a mechanism for regulating behaviors and discouraging or banning specific attitudes in the city’s main public space.

Reflecting on his policies shortly before the Universiade, the mayor expressed optimism about Krasnoyarsk’s acquiring the characteristics of the much desired stolichnost: Becoming a “capital city.” In this view, then, becoming “capital” with regard to public space was synonymous with zero toler-
This series of spatial transformation can be identified as reflecting the transition of peripheral Russia from (1) post-Soviet instability (law violations, shady investors, municipal neglect) through (2) a short window of openness (bottom-up informality and summer kiosks) to (3) neoliberal managerial control (generic, regulated public space). The material manifestation of this transition from (1) to (3) has been direct but excluded (2), whose spatial and sociocultural imprint was mocked and finally dismissed without being taken into consideration as a constituent social attribute that deserved to be present in public spaces.

Therefore, the materialities introduced with the CUE had a twofold effect: First, they functioned as a reference point for changing urban policies, and second, they were instrumentalized to create a regulatory frame for the public space. In that, the CUE indeed embodied the new social contract between state and society. Finding its place in a presidential decree prescribing national goals and strategic objectives for the coming years, blagoustroistvo was formally elevated into a national objective (Putin, 2018b). Urban renewal was deemed necessary so that the state could provide “a modern living environment, to transform our cities and towns […] to form a large, active middle class in Russia” (Putin, 2018a). To the urban policy discourse in secondary cities, this call for modernization signaled a new social contract, including the translation of new policies that would accommodate the needs of the middle classes with regard to the quality of urban environments. In Krasnoyarsk, the materialization of this call for modernization was translated into the revitalization of the main waterfront. Young local actors who were knowledgeable in international trends in urbanism and could carry out the translation were commissioned. Part of this process, however, became instrumentalized as part of mayoral brand politics. In addition, the materialization of the program not only allowed the actions of those involved to grow in the direction of managerial agency, but also provided the background for the unfolding of the abovementioned characteristics (see Ch. 6.2.3).

With the mayoral figure taking pride in the city’s acquisition of “capital city” characteristics, it follows that the revitalization of the embankment allowed for broader claims to be made, as discussed below.

6.5.2. Glocal materialities

The first section of the reconstructed waterfront was delivered to the public in the spring of 2018, attracting extensive media attention. Enthusiasm and
pride were short-lived as the newly paved tiles began to crack only a few days later. With an angered public and the Universiade deadlines approaching, the contractor returned almost immediately to repair the damage. Upon the delivery of subsequent sections as summer approached, attempts to celebrate local specificities in the landscaping became visible. The enhancement of local capacities and skills was indeed among the aims of the CUE, and many local creatives and manufacturers were included in the process of design and construction. A successful young landscape designer from Moscow was invited to replace a parking lot with a small, freshly designed park. Seeking to bring forth a local identity, she equipped the park with indigenous Siberian plants. Elsewhere, local designers prepared prototypes of furniture and tested them in public, while another young company worked on the replacement of the area’s nighttime illumination. These actors took pride in working toward the improvement of their city’s public spaces. The CUE provided favorable conditions, allowing them to experiment with designs and materials and to apply their ideas in space, which is not a given in Russia. Their words, however, demonstrate something additional: When advertising their modern facilities, the manufacturer of the slabs used to pave the embankment took pride not in local design and production as such, but in something else: “With the use of German equipment, we produce products of true European quality: Sidewalks in many European cities are paved with similar tiles” (GK Vibor, 2019). This indicates that the sense of pride constructed in this marketing campaign is derived not from a simple demonstration of local skills and material quality but also from their European quality. Found everywhere in the relevant advertising, these assurances reveal a desire to be part of something bigger – if not global, then at least western European. Skills and products made in Russia, let alone Siberia or Krasnoyarsk, do not seem to have a place in that equation. In addition, although Strelka CB publications took pride precisely in enhancing the skills of local designers, Strelka CB itself boasted that it possessed skills of European quality.

This perspective was not limited to the people involved in the project. During our discussion, a young alternative musician felt strongly that the informal activities on the waterfront should be expelled: This part should be clean and tidy and, in general, a different mindset was needed in the city; transport, for example, should be based on cycling, as in Europe, Amsterdam

81 … and integrated in the Russian language in general, as in the term evroremont, which refers to good standards of renovation, usually of an apartment. The term is common in other Slavic languages, such as Polish and Czech, as well, and it reflects a broader cultural phenomenon that dates back to the early years of post-socialism.
in particular. However, that person seemed to have idealized certain aspects, unaware that the bicycle by no means dominates transport in European cities. This was only one incident of disappointment and disapproval of life in one’s own city combined with longing for an imaginary Western city, mentally constructed as axiomatically better in all possible aspects.

Such pieces of information might appear trivial, but they go hand in hand with a broader notion: This is the desire to be contemporary in any way possible. However this notion is formally articulated, its translation into the local context is what underpins such statements, although they may not at first appear to be connected. I made similar observations while attending a series of events organized by Strelka in Krasnoyarsk. At the week’s main event, the project for the new waterfront was presented by Shatalov, the main local actor, and his Strelka CB colleague from Moscow. The presentation was objective and humble, including the team’s apologies for the construction errors. All in all, their emphasis was on demonstrating the attempt to produce an entirely new materiality within the CUE (see Figure 6.2). The newly landscaped area was described as chic, a place that could now inspire beauty and resemble a “Scandinavian” landscape. It was perhaps this choice of words that triggered a comment from the audience that the result of the revitalization resembled an IKEA catalogue. This was received as a compliment by the main speaker, who added that a background that looked like IKEA would be perfectly neutral, allowing for the integration of future people and uses.

This longing for a materiality resembling a global yet neutral reference risked becoming intertwined with something non-identifiable: Another member of the audience remarked that, having recently visited Vladivostok, it seemed to her that the embankments in both cities looked almost identical. The speakers denied any such similarities, at least intentional ones. A similar critique was later expressed at the national level in an assessment of the impact of the CUE in peripheral cities: The establishment of generic, homogenous and homogenizing aesthetics was observed, with a minister appearing disturbed by the mass copying of landscaping projects on embankments or boulevards à la Moscow […] the embankment in Novosibirsk now looks exactly like that of Krasnoyarsk. […] Regional authorities should involve local specialists and not constantly rely on Moscow urbanists. (“Andrei Chibis…”, 2018)
However, local specialists had indeed been involved. They had designed these embankments themselves under the guidance of Strelka CB. I thus realized that this was not a question of knowledge transfer alone. Change had been steered centrally, including the subtle imposition of aesthetics. I would argue that the creation of this scheme, which disseminated norms and standards and channeled aesthetic preferences, was part of the new social contract between state and society. Indeed, it had not been at hand, or at least not evidently, only three years earlier. Now it was apparently everywhere, having imposed its aesthetics, injected them in the most visible and visited public spaces, and imprinted them, like a new imperial trademark, in numerous cities across the territory. It seemed that, once again in the history of Russian urban design and development, an all-encompassing structure had been instituted within less than half a decade. As in the period of Catherine’s autocracy (Ch. 2.1), the all-encompassing state structure this time advocated the provision of elegant main public spaces, akin to those of international contemporary design, through the targeted injection of resources – regardless of the state of the city’s overall infrastructure.
6. POLICY KNOWLEDGE

6.5.3. Revitalization via regulation

The appearance of the abovementioned state structure is associated with the meteoric rise of Strelka CB. The contract for the CUE granted it access to urban space across the country and an unforeseen expansion. For instance, and not long thereafter, Strelka’s owner attended a state Duma meeting on the development of public spaces and the introduction of standards for Integrated Territorial Development in the country (“Volodin schitaet…”, 2019). Judging from numerous similar announcements of the period (as in Strelka, 2017b), one can observe that what had started as an avant-garde educational and research cluster grew in the course of less than five years into something resembling a federal contractor and mobilizer of knowledge in the promising field of urbanism.

After it was laid, this structure filtered information and knowledge and managed a multitude of local actors across the territory who, after having been identified, were now tasked with infusing skills, spreading knowledge, and influencing trends. Studying the promotional material for the embankment in Krasnoyarsk, one cannot fail to be impressed by the rigorous work produced by the Moscow experts. Upon closer inspection, however, it did not differ significantly from earlier municipal designs for the landscaping of the area. The actions of Strelka CB were initially modest, arguing for the need to stop painting old curbs. Soon, though, it appeared that the practice of painting curbs was being replaced by the practice of paving tiles. In most participating cities, as in Krasnoyarsk, the funds from the CUE were allocated to the reconstruction of main public spaces that were already in good condition. In this, the CUE and Strelka CB literally scratched the surface. The imposition of a generic aesthetic that resulted in a homogenization of public spaces in various cities made it more difficult to detect what part of the output had originated from local discourses and visions and what part of it consisted of copy-and-paste design solutions transplanted in a top-down manner. Following this kind of intermeshing and an aggressive PR strategy, the work of local actors was in danger of going unnoticed:

I don’t want to have it labeled as the Strelka project. And it’s not a Strelka project. We have put in our own effort, personal energy, this is something we are doing ourselves. (Interview 29)

At the national level, the Moscow office was taking pride in the success of the CUE via seemingly uninterrupted positive media coverage. In Krasnoyarsk, however, the tiles at the new waterfront cracked within a week of being paved.
Repair works were ordered immediately. Who was to blame? Discussing the results of the program in another city, a young planner emphasized the role of centralized resource distribution as well as intermediary barriers that delayed the seamless coordination and execution of the works:

> Deadlines are set tight: You get the project in June and have to deliver everything by December. Otherwise you have to give back part of the money. And as a result you have the problems that you see, and the ones in Krasnoyarsk, I know about them. […] The point is, we don’t manage our budget. The money leaves the Republic, goes to Moscow, and then it’s transferred back to us, but now it’s called federal money. And from there, we have no say over deadlines, and so on. (Interview 29)

In Krasnoyarsk, another aspect of the process was recalled. As my informant explained, paving took place towards the end of the winter, during which, in this part of Siberia, construction works such as paving are impossible due to the active freeze-thaw cycle. However, the deadlines had been fixed without considering such details as the project had to be delivered by spring. Unsurprisingly, the stone tiles cracked. However, my informant defended the diligence of the contractor, who rushed to deliver on time: “Everyone was in a hurry; the contractor tried his best to deliver as fast as he could. It could have been much worse” (Interview 27). Regardless, the fact was that Strelka CB and federal ministerial mechanisms had assisted in the revitalization of the embankment by offering advice, funds, and, not least, deadlines, which were set to serve ministerial and political narratives. Across the country, local authorities accepted all CUE guidelines and recommendations, admitting that:

> [one] should not look a gift horse in the mouth. […] The program is seen by the regions with ‘survival budgets’ as an opportunity, so they try not to criticize the proposed projects. (Gruzinova et al., 2017)

In the context of rushing and lacking the possibility to negotiate changes in the schedule, works were only beginning to take off; they continued unabated during the summer of 2018. Indeed, the main section of the waterfront was landscaped in time to welcome the Universiade visitors in February 2019. Afterwards, further works were streamlined and continued in extended parts of the riverfront under different design offices and subcontractors, thereby bringing to fruition the municipal vision that had been submitted at the beginning of the decade.
Hence, while the local actors did not coordinate to respond effectively to the policy knowledge challenge introduced by the CUE, they nonetheless constituted a populous, vocal group of experts and professionals willing to accept the challenge. As was demonstrated, it had been the local actors who set the legal framework for the future of the waterfront and sought to apply it as early as the early 2010s (see Ch. 6.3.2). It was, therefore, local policies that had prescribed urban renewal. Those policies were considered when deciding how the federal funds would be allocated, and not the opposite. Local actors made these decisions and, in the process, instrumentalized the CUE for their own purposes, i.e. to serve locally defined priorities over the specificities of the public spaces in question (see Figure 6.1).

This constant adaptation of policy knowledge was not limited to the young designers but assisted in the ongoing process of rendering the embankment a wholesome, healthy area. Something similar applied to the attitudes of the new mayor: The landscaped waterfront was instrumentalized by the internet-savvy mayor, who positioned himself comfortably in the public space and performed the role of the proactive, eco-friendly, entrepreneurial official. Finally, this first revitalization was the precursor of larger PPPs, which were arranged between the governor and the main regional industrial players as they themselves expressed interest in positioning themselves in urban renewal policies for the regional capital. Those desires to forge a central public space underlining the wealth and prudence of the city on the Yenisei, expressed and materialized by small local actors and large industrial companies alike, were thus accordingly positioned in the public space, as were all programmatic statements for the future of the space. In reality, the adaptation to concepts brought about by the CUE was always conditional on strong actor agency.

Looking back to the above-described glocal materialities (Swyngedouw, 2004) one can observe them literally becoming materialized in the case of the singular, unified aesthetic that Moscow’s knowledge mobilizers, transferers, and translators sprinkled across the country. The persistence of the mechanism that made this imposition of aesthetics inevitable and turned them against local actors’ self-perception in such a way that it was impossible, except by resorting to an IKEA catalogue, to feel part of something, brings me to an embedded local notion of a desired breakthrough to be attained with whatever means are available in the given moment. Achieving that breakthrough at all costs related not only to the rush to conclude the landscaping works ahead of the Universiade, the need to conform to the CUE, or the need to address middle-class needs by gentrifying a main public space. It cut
through all of these elements and constituted a break with the self-perceived provinciality of the elsewhere, turning towards the attainment of internationally styled, landscaped public space, that is, a notion of becoming something which yet does not exist, driven exclusively by strong local agency. It was through this agency that the new social contract between the state and urban middle classes, formally represented by the CUE, was met: That local middle class was offered the “purification” of a central public space, its regulatory function, and the injection of a glocal materiality.

6.6. Conclusions: Regulatory spaces

This chapter has examined the translation of one case of an urban renewal process into policy knowledge in the context of a state program for revitalization in a major eastern Siberian city. Structured around four main research questions, the analysis shows that this process has consisted of (a) public space materiality legacies that did not resonate with the city’s present socio-economic profile, (b) the long-term problematizing of the revitalization of the public space, (c) a set of agile actors engaged in the revitalization processes, and (d) the consolidation of regulatory urban policies upon implementation of the state program and the delivery of a revitalized public space. It has been demonstrated that the state program merged with established local policy frameworks; I have also underscored the regulatory prism through which local actors viewed urban space, formed the translation of policy knowledge ambitions, and drew visions of Krasnoyarsk as part of a global community.

At the turn of the century, Krasnoyarsk went through significant socio-economic change and maintained or even enhanced its leading regional role. The local discourse on urbanity culminated in the formulation of a new normative approach to policies in the early 2010s. Among others, this entailed the long-overdue revitalization of the main waterfront. The Federal Program for a Comfortable Urban Environment arrived as a stimulus in addition to this ongoing process. I have framed it as an agential hyper-structure that mobilized policy knowledge from the national center towards regional localities. Knowledge was transferred to local actors, and resources were allocated into the revitalization process. The process coincided with the maturation of the entrepreneurialization of municipal government and the formulation of a new problematizing of the urban by a cohort of younger experts and professional actors. Conditioned by their actions, the contextualization of the policy knowledge saw the enhancement of the regulatory
character of urban revitalization. This observation highlights a specificity, guiding action and shaping policies in the selected locale: That of the quest not only for a revitalized public space, but also for attaining internationalized materialities and, thereby, increased international visibility.
7. Policy model: Participatory compensation

The third and final case examined in this thesis concerns the translation of a process for urban renewal into a process of the contextualization of a policy model as demonstrated in an example of participation-based urbanism. This chapter describes a mining company’s initiation of the process and its infusion with social responsibility practices. The analysis frames the participatory planning as a process that mainly addressed chronic shortages and scarcity and was less concerned with instituting a policy model. The analysis is guided by the research questions set in the introductory chapter, regarding (a) the moments of normative change, (b) the structure and responses of the actor landscape, (c) the resources allocated, and (d) the physical output of the changing urban policies in the selected setting.

As noted in Chapter 2, participatory planning is a relatively recent arrival in urban design. Especially with the inclusion of urban well-being, inclusivity, citizen participation, health, and environmental indicators in international understandings of urbanism, participatory design processes have been acknowledged as constituents of bottom-up representation, social fairness, and cohesion.

The focus in this chapter is a corporate social responsibility (CSR) program launched in Russia, principally in Siberia and the Urals, by an aluminum company. Initially aiming at the sociocultural development of cities and towns, the program grew to include components of participatory urbanism. I argue that the mobilization of the policy model has been concomitant with developments unrelated to the Siberian localities they came to affect: First was the globalization of the Russian aluminum industry in the 2000s, which necessitated normative changes to match corporate codes of conduct. This triggered the adoption of an up-to-date CSR program. Second, improved relations between the company and the state paved the way for the alignment of the CSR with governance structures. One of the settings that witnessed the translation of a process for urban renewal as part of this broader shift has been Achinsk, a city much smaller than those addressed in the previous chapters but in which the impact of the social program in the local context can be more readily uncovered. The analysis considers changes
in existing normative frameworks and the agency of local actors as processes of the contextualization of a policy model. In this contextualization, the translation of participatory planning is framed as the impetus for instituting a compensatory urbanism.

7.1. Context

7.1.1. Introducing the case

As discussed in Chapter 4.6, Russia in the early 2010s, about to join the WTO and other international organizations, appeared to be confidently undergoing integration into the global economy. The confidence was associated with good economic performance largely driven by the resource and extractive industries, which were responding to global demand. Aluminum is central to the mining sector in Russia, and the leading aluminum company in Russia is United Company Rusal (UC Rusal; hereafter “Rusal”). Born of the merging of RUSAL, SUAL, and the aluminum assets of Glencore in 2007, Rusal was, upon its establishment, the largest aluminum company in the world. According to the company, by 2012 it accounted for approximately 7% of global production of aluminum and alumina and employed more than 60,000 people in thirteen countries, with operational facilities in Sweden, Australia, Italy, and Nigeria and company listings on the Moscow, Hong Kong, and European stock exchanges.

The company is operative mainly in the Urals and Siberia. To a large extent, it is heir to the Soviet-era aluminum industrial complex, which was designed and laid out in the second half of the twentieth century. Following the stagnation of the 1990s, Rusal’s first foray into contemporary social responsibility coincided with the adoption of the Code of Corporate Ethics in 2005 (Rusal [ca. 2018]) and the establishment of a number of offices for social programs in several cities in central-eastern Siberia. A few years later, a number of full-fledged social programs had been launched.

As the main employer in many small and medium-sized localities in a peripheral part of Russia, Rusal has had a defining role in their economies; the launch and recent expansion of social programs has had an analogous impact on the cities themselves. Framed as the mobilities of contemporary policies and their translation, that impact forms the backbone of the present

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82 SUAL was the Siberian-Ural Aluminum Company (Сибирско-Уральская Алюминиевая Компания). Glencore is a multinational commodity trading and mining company.

83 Aluminum oxide, commonly called alumina, is an intermediate for the production of aluminum. Aluminum oxides are the main component of bauxite, the principal ore of aluminum.
7. POLICY MODEL

analysis. The next section introduces the sociohistorical context of Achinsk, which functions as a territorially situated reference point in this study.

7.1.2. Historical background

Achinsk is located in central-eastern Siberia, 200 kilometers west of Krasnoyarsk. It was founded in 1641 to the south of the Tomsk fortress on the Chulym River, a tributary of the Ob. Following a major fire, it was entirely rebuilt in 1683. Later, the passing of the Moscow–Siberian Tract allowed the settlement to grow and obtain city status in 1782. Its first city plan was designed in the 1790s; the city acquired its cathedral in 1802 and a regular plan in 1826. The main landmark and spatial reference point was the Kazan Church, completed in 1833. In the 1850s, Achinsk was arranged into distinct northern and southern parts.

The city maintained a provincial flair, with direct proximity to open nature and a large portion of its housing stock built according to traditional techniques. Stone and brick construction became widespread in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, following the brick-style eclecticism of the architecture of Tomsk, with many engineers and architects from that city working in Achinsk as well. The period saw the flourishing of the city, with complex architectural solutions applied in private homes, schools, the public treasury, and the train station (Slabucha, 1998).

The arrival of the Trans-Siberian Railway spurred the development of a large military complex, which grew into an entire settlement between 1908 and 1914, and the growth of the construction industry. More complex buildings of stone or brick appeared, including a synagogue, a cinema, merchant houses, and primary and secondary education buildings. Before 1917, the role of Achinsk as a transportation hub had increased with the establishment of a rail connection to farming lands in the south of Krasnoyarsk (Slabucha, 2004).

In the early Soviet period, industrialization was anticipated and integrated into the spatial organization of the city. Urban expansion was arranged accordingly after World War II, with industrial growth resulting in the development of a fully dual city split into northern and southern parts. The decision to establish an alumina plant in Achinsk was taken in 1955 under the TPC dictum (see Ch. 4.5). The plant became operative in 1970 as part of the Soviet aluminum industry and, more specifically, the energy–metallurgical TPC in Krasnoyarsk Krai. Apart from the Achinsk Alumina Refinery, the main plants of this TPC were the Krasnoyarsk Aluminum Plant and the Krasnoyarsk HPP.
Soon, the alumina and oil refinery plants became the main city-forming enterprises. The city expanded spatially, especially in the 1970s and the 1980s. The northern and southern sectors were designated the historical and industrial districts, respectively (Ogly, 1980). In the latter, housing expanded in the form typical of Soviet residential districts. The two city enterprises provided employment and housing and were the pillars of sustained demographic growth, largely defining the role of Achinsk as a small regional center in central-eastern Siberia along the Trans-Siberian. This setting has remained largely unchanged to the present day.

7.1.3. Sociospatial attributes

Today, Achinsk is one of the numerous medium-sized cities scattered across Russia whose perspectives have rather halted. Nonetheless, the city has not fallen into despair, as it still hosts operative industries and remains an important logistics hub in central-eastern Siberia. The absence of proximity to an international airport does not isolate Achinsk; it is well positioned between the hubs of Novosibirsk and Krasnoyarsk, standing on both the Abakan–Moscow rail route and the R255 federal highway.

Spatially, today’s Achinsk has a rather broken structure: Garage plots are interspersed with industrial and railway bases, private warehouses, and residential buildings. The city is visibly underfunded, and the Soviet-era residential districts look run down as well. The historic center boasts an unexpectedly large number of beautifully crafted late-nineteenth-century brick buildings that reflect the wealth of a bygone era. A regional heritage preservation program has been recently launched to renovate this important building stock. Many structures, however, are in poor condition and are gradually disintegrating.

Heirs of the Soviet period, the main drivers of the city’s economy are two plants: The oil refinery and the alumina plant. Employment in the city revolves around the Russian railways, Rosneft, and Rusal. Apart from these, private companies are small, retail is weak, construction activity is limited, and Achinsk’s few higher education institutes and military facilities have no significant impact. The city has been undergoing depopulation for over 20 years, from an all-time high of approximately 120,000 in the mid-1990s to slightly more than 100,000 inhabitants in the late 2010s. In general, its economy, administrative self-management powers, and overall development prospects have been overshadowed by neighboring Krasnoyarsk, which has a defining influence on Achinsk’s budget and arrangement of capital investments.
Figure 7.1. Timeline of a process of compensation. The lines highlight several central moments in the development of a social program to the point of introducing participatory urbanist policies in small localities and implementing them on the basis of structured regional programs in the second half of the 2010s. (Drawn by author)
7.2. Lack of resources

7.2.1. Globalized wealth

Rusal has been associated with the figure of Oleg Deripaska, an individual who amassed wealth during the 1990s and came to essentially control the Russian aluminum industry. In Siberia, the company owns the Krasnoyarsk Aluminum Plant; the Achinsk Alumina Refinery; the Boguchansky Aluminum Plant; plants in Bratsk, Sayanogorsk, Novokuзnetsk, and Irkutsk; and the Kiy-Shaltyrsky nepheline mine in Kemerovo. Rusal owns the aluminum plants in the cities of Kamensk-Uralsky and Krasnoturinsk in the Urals, as well as plants in the regions of Murmansk, Volgograd, Leningrad, and Karelia in European Russia and the aluminum plant in southern Ukraine’s Mykolaiv. These are all large enterprises, often the main employers in single-industry towns. Other Deripaska-controlled assets in eastern Siberia include EvroSibEnergo, operating in the HPPs of Bratsk, Irkutsk, Krasnoyarsk, and Ust-Ilimsk; a number of thermal power plants in Irkutsk; and a solar power project in Khakassia. The Krasnoyarsk HPP is also part of Deripaska’s En+ group. In Achinsk, alumina from the plant is supplied to the neighboring aluminum plants in Krasnoyarsk, Sayanogorsk, and Novokuзnetsk and, further to the east, in Bratsk and Irkutsk.

It is worth noting that non-ferrous metallurgy plays an important role in the Russian economy, as it is vital to the country’s industry and construction as well as to its fuel and energy complexes. Its importance is particularly pronounced in the abovementioned regions and especially in industrial company towns, where metallurgy traditionally provides employment and indirectly supports large parts of regional economies. Rusal falls under this paradigm as well: The company’s direct and indirect contributions to economic activity render it one of the pillars of the Siberian economy (“Avansy vpechatliaiut”, 2007). Shortly before the 2008-2009 economic crisis, for instance, Rusal and Norilsk Nickel together accounted for over 70% of the industrial output of Krasnoyarsk Krai.

The eastward expansion of Rusal became more pronounced in the late 2000s. With several large energy projects by Rosneft having slowed due to the 2008-2009 crisis, Rusal’s projects were viewed by the state as strategic for the energy supply to China and the APR, and the completion of these projects was therefore encouraged. In the area of Lower Angara, approximately 700 kilometers northeast of Krasnoyarsk and in the northwest of Irkutsk, the

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84 Vankor and Yurubcheno-Tokhomskoye fields in northern Krasnoyarsk, and the expansion of the Verkhnehchonskoye field in northern Irkutsk.
company was set to construct Boguchansky HPP, the fifth largest in Russia. Upon its completion, and with the construction of a homonymous aluminum smelter, the Boguchansky energy and metals complex would become fully operational. In the same period, the construction of another aluminum plant was announced in Taishet, near Boguchansky. Funds amounting to almost four billion USD were invested in these two projects in the late 2000s. While Rusal was busy completing Boguchansky and securing a 1.4 billion USD loan from the China Development Bank Corporation in order to proceed with Taishet (“Bank razvitiia Kitaia…”, 2012), it was at war with regional authorities over the company’s municipal debts and regional tax contributions, which represented relatively trivial amounts.

7.2.2. Regional lobbying

Regional and municipal debts and tax evasion have been recurring issues in the company’s relations with state authorities. A frequent topic in local news, it drew international attention in 2010–2011 as the case of a regional conflict over Norilsk Nickel escalated into an oligarchs’ feud revolving around Siberian assets.

That process of legal battles over large enterprises was also very common in second-tier Siberia. Amongst oligarch wars, Rusal’s contribution to civic and social affairs was meager. Any such contribution was an outcome of negotiations, or at least was reported as such, with the governor acting as intermediary and lobbying for securing funds and Deripaska counterbalancing pressure with his control over municipal authorities. Such negotiations also reflected the loose federal legislation that allowed companies to freely register their tax bases in other jurisdictions. From its side, the company routinely denounced accusations about tax evasions and promised to take on obligations related to environmental policy. A loose notion of “social responsibility” was later added to some of the company’s social activities, but in reality, these represented brief moments of charity actions. In addition, and aside from the manipulation of taxation regulation, the general understanding of the term “social responsibility” appears to have been somewhat confined to the provision of wages and employment (“Oligarkhov posadiat…”, 2003).86

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85 The economic crisis, however, slowed the implementation of both projects: Boguchansky was inaugurated only in 2019, and Taishet is still under construction.

86 Characteristic of this was Governor Khloponin’s plea that regional enterprises’ social programs comply with tax legislation and extend to the society, not just to Rusal employees (“Biznes dolzhen byt’ …”, 2008).
Rusal is responsible for extensive environmental pollution of soil and bodies of water across Siberia. Annual state environmental reports have consistently classified the plants in Achinsk and Krasnoyarsk as particularly highly polluting. In the absence of a clear legal framework and/or consequences, the company appears to have had no interest in addressing the matter of environmental pollution in its areas of operation. In addition, like other enterprises, Rusal possessed the legal means to overcome these issues. As a result, although federal and regional authorities routinely fine the plant for the deliberate contamination of soil and water, the decisions are met with appeals or the fines are negligible ("Achinskii glinozemnyi kombinat…", 2016; ‘RUSAL Achinsk’ zaplatit bolee 400…”, 2015; ‘RUSAL Achinsk’ zaplatit bolee 30…”, 2016). It generally remains more profitable for enterprises to pollute the environment and be fined for it than to invest in improvements. This is not limited to the city or the enterprise in question but extends to other cases of industrial pollution across the Siberian Federal District, whose cities perform badly environmentally.87

The 2005 adoption of the Code of Corporate Ethics marked an official milestone for Rusal. However, it had little effect on the company’s tense relations with the state. In one of Deripaska’s rare visits to Krasnoyarsk, for example, local media emphasized that he did not bother meeting either municipal or regional authorities, but went directly to inspect his assets (“Na etikh…”, 2010). Conflicts peaked in 2010 with the regional electricity company defaulting after the Krasnoyarsk alumina plant delayed its payments and refused to pay regional taxes. The overall situation appeared to have little weight for the general public, as it was common knowledge that both Rusal and Norilsk Nickel utilized offshore schemes to evade taxes and allocated tiny shares of their profits to regional budgets. Any contribution of the company to the city’s social infrastructure or cultural life was thus met with cynicism.

7.2.3. Localized scarcity

The precedent of company disregard of quality of life in the city included moments of direct confrontation such as worker strikes over unpaid salaries. Indeed, the birth of the company itself as part of the privatization of the Soviet aluminum industry took place during a period of prolonged in-

87 The 2010 list of the most polluted Russian cities, compiled by the Ministry of Natural Resources, included both Achinsk and Krasnoyarsk (“Krasnoyarsk, Minusinsk…”, 2012).
This era was dotted with events such as the unresolved death of the head of the alumina plant’s independent trade union. Manipulation of elections was common, and Rusal controlled parts of the Achinsk city council and thus dictated the city’s policies. Company-affiliated deputies undermined independent voices campaigning for higher social expenditures or accused them of populism; the city council turned a blind eye to indications of rapid increases of various forms of cancer, and plant management went so far as to appeal regional governmental bodies’ reporting on the direct disposal of waste in bodies of water. In this atmosphere, the mayor did little more than complain about the tax evasion practices that stripped the municipal budget of valuable resources.

Economic contraction had also seen the shuttering of the city’s cement factory, with the governor rejecting the mayor’s requests to assist in keeping it operative on the grounds that it was not the state’s business to assist private companies. The factory reopened in 2007 under Deripaska’s ownership; its announced goal was to cover the demand for new housing in the city, to participate in regional housing projects, and to supply Rusal’s eastward expansion projects in Lower Angara. In that context of the completion of asset privatization, a report for the city’s socioeconomic development vaguely referred to Rusal and to its critical role in the city’s development (City of Achinsk, 2007) but provided no concrete evidence of its impact upon the city. Apart from funding the construction of several sports facilities, no contribution to the city’s social infrastructure took place in this period. Municipal funds hardly sufficed for provisions as basic as a maternity hospital, but a PPP approach surfaced in the early 2010s according to which the construction of a kindergarten, the city’s first for 30 years, was made possible via a partnership with Rusal. The renovations of a cinema hall and a youth center were also co-financed, while the mayor’s requests for financing for the reconstruction of the city stadium eventually attracted Rosneft. Rusal also co-financed the reconstruction of a square. City officials, including the mayor, donated parts of their personal salaries to this project in a symbolic gesture that sought to raise awareness of the city’s finances. At the same time, in lieu of paying municipal debts and fines in full, the company allocated a portion of the amount due to

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88 In the early 1990s, local criminal networks, until that time engaged only in racketeering, entered the business of laundering and smuggling aluminum. The redistribution of their spheres of influence in the aluminum industry resulted in several contract killings, which continued until 1996. It was in this period, termed the “first aluminum war,” that the figure of Anatoly Bykov emerged. Bykov led the Krasnoyarsk Aluminum Plant until his arrest in 1999. Rusal, then under Oleg Deripaska and Roman Abramovich, proceeded to dominate the aluminum sector in Krasnoyarsk Krai until the mid-2000s.
the city in the form of subsidies to settle the difference (“Biznes nishchayet…”, 2012). Therefore, and while the square renovation seemingly resembled a PPP project, it was a drop in the ocean in comparison to the compromises among key actors in exchange for favors and tax write-offs.

This degree of resource scarcity at the local level characterized the “wild capitalism” period of the 1990s and continued long after the internationalization of Rusal in the 2000s. The contrast between an impoverished and polluted city to whose development the company occasionally contributed, and the company’s global revenues and leadership in the aluminum sector (not to mention Deripaska himself, ranked the ninth richest man in the world in 2008), is nothing if not extreme; it is a clear demonstration of a powerful, internationalized center in control of a powerless, peripheral locality.

What the city itself has meant to the expansive and internationalizing company remains to be seen. The nature of the relationships among the company, the refinery, and the city over time, as well as the impact of these relationships on the urban environment of such a dependent periphery, are investigated in the following part.

7.3. Variegated normative change

7.3.1. Post-Soviet policies

Long after the dissolution of the Soviet system, city planning affairs were still arranged using the tools inherited from the Soviet period, and they continued to experience the same problems. For example, the 2005 General Plan, drafted by a St. Petersburg-based research institute, was already irrelevant upon its publication and did not address the realities of environmental contamination and infrastructural deprivation. The city architect, a person with rather cosmetic tasks, presented the draft to regional authorities for approval. Concerns about the city’s environmental degradation and the activities of the alumina and oil refineries were submitted by the regional institute for urban and territorial planning. The draft was then considered in public hearings, at which citizens submitted proposals on such topics as the arrangement of the waterfront, the construction of a residential microdistrict, and improvements in the sphere of culture. Even these modest concerns had little impact on the drafting of the document; they were merely registered, and the regional authorities determined whether to allocate the funds to bring the plan to fruition. In sum, the 2005 General Plan and later amendments (RosNIPI, 2011/2013) are rather descriptive and suggest little
more than improvement of the housing stock (as is common in such documents in Russia); it failed to reflect urgent city needs.

The ten-year program for socioeconomic development, prepared in 2007 in accordance with other regional development projects, clearly documented all of the city’s problems and weaknesses: Depopulation, dilapidated housing, an almost nonexistent construction sector, and a weak private economy (City of Achinsk, 2007). As is very common in such documents, “development” is a one-size-fits-all term. It includes no discussion of quality of life in the city and no references to the attractiveness of the urban environment. The term implies, rather, the implementation of regional investment programs, which purportedly bring rapid improvements by following the established path of interventions such as road paving (see Figure 7.2).

![Figure 7.2. Asphalt paving on the main street of Achinsk at the expense of the regional program “Streets of Krasnoyarsk Krai,” representative of the standard approach to urban improvements. (Photograph by the author, September 2015)](image.png)

This absence of any problematizing of the urban is unsurprising, as such discussions were at the time only beginning to intensify in Russia: There would be no reason to expect that such issues would be met with cutting-edge policies in the context of scarcity in a small regional center. Rather, and since
policy officials in local governments often prefer to draw policy lessons from within their own region (Wolman and Page, 2002, in Stead, 2016), one would expect a certain lag in the arrival of policy tools, if they arrived at all. The 2010s, however, brought change, if not in the objective material reality, then at least in the provision of such policy tools. The internationalization of Rusal and its rapid integration in a globalizing economic order played a major role in seeking out new, appropriate forms of governance (Interviews 3, 17) that matched these new conditions.

7.3.2. Introducing social responsibility

Rusal’s official turn to the social sphere came with the 2005 Code. At the time, conceptualizations of social responsibility in Russia and Siberia in particular were still conflated with notions of contribution to the common good passed on from the Soviet period: In the Soviet economy, urban development had been the task of the factories themselves, which provided housing and amenities to their workers. In Soviet Achinsk, the alumina plant had fulfilled this duty by erecting entire housing quarters, and it was thus inextricably linked not only to the provision of social infrastructure but also to urbanization itself and the production of material urban space. With the collapse of the command economy and the subsequent prolonged instability described above, this link was lost. The introduction of new concepts of social responsibility, though, led to the resurfacing of the previous paradigm according to which the enterprise provided for the full range of social infrastructure, including the built environment. Thus, in the late 2000s, the notion of social responsibility either denoted various forms of charity or was synonymous with employees’ social packages – such as vouchers, pension schemes, corporate housing, and mortgage loans. With regard to urban space, then, the term “social” described, at best, the setting up of amenities in the new residential quarters built by the company in other parts of Siberia. When stating that “social responsibility” should not only cover company employees but should also benefit society, regional authorities referred to the regional multiplier effects that the company’s social packages would generate (“Biznes dolzhen byt’ …”, 2008; “Profil’- blagotvoritel’nost’…”, 2008).

These approaches do not correspond to international standards for social responsibility. However, they were radically revised with the adoption of the company’s ten-year strategy in 2011. Taking on greater social responsibility and becoming a “well-liked and dependable employer” were declared strategic goals (Rusal Sustainability Report, 2011: 19). In addition to the usual provision and securing of attractive employment conditions, employee
training, and access to housing with preferential mortgage rates, a strong social component was included. This would take the form of an increase in public outreach, coordination with municipalities and the creation of a youth movement built upon the tradition of Soviet youth volunteering programs. Demonstrating a turn towards participatory processes for the improvement of urban environment, the company’s grant program, “Territory Rusal,” was given a qualitative and quantitative boost: it expanded geographically, its budget increased, and it was to run on PPP principles that involved federal co-financing and self-financing towards the “sustainable development of cities” (“Ob’явлен новыи…”, 2014; “RUSAL подве…”, 2012). This was a clear claim of departure from questions of charity or political favors; rather, improvements in the social sphere through participatory processes at the local level were described as a prerequisite for the company’s favorable development in the regions.

Rusal thereby demonstrated a will to structure its social programs along two axes: Past and present, local and international. The first was about the revival of Soviet volunteering traditions; the second was about sustainable development. This marked a qualitative departure from just a few years prior, when the company’s actions were limited to mobilizing schoolchildren and engaging them in seasonal gardening activities. In recognition of its increased complexity and novel attentiveness to social responsibility, the “Territory Rusal” contest (part of the program with the same name) was granted a federal award.

The company expanded its social programs by launching the “Pomogat Prosto” volunteering support program. Gradually, the programs were refined to become more professionalized, with the introduction of an expert committee and an online public voting system. In the first half of the 2010s, Territory Rusal grew into a full-fledged program that sought to upgrade social infrastructure in Siberian cities. In tangible terms, this meant funding for Achinsk’s city museum and equipment for a local youth center. Elsewhere, it meant co-funding projects such as the Kamenka municipal cultural center in Krasnoyarsk, a 3D laboratory in Zheleznogorsk, historical research in Sayanogorsk, and more. These actions paved the way for the rapid growth of the program’s outreach in the second half of the 2010s.

The increased outreach was noticeable because there had previously been so little of it. As sketched above, throughout the 2000s, Rusal had a very poor social presence and built a negative image overall. Any contribution to social causes came in the form of occasional small sums for repairs or beautification. Beginning in 2011, though, the company’s social profile became
more consequential and structured: It was now indeed a policy, with clear outlines and objectives, timelines, and people charged with its management. In addition, Rusal committed to taking substantial measures to fight environmental pollution and pledged to support the growth of the SME sector in the Siberian economy.

On the other hand, Rosneft, the city’s second main employer, also revived the Soviet paradigm of the caring industrial enterprise: Shortly before the end of 2013, and with an extensive modernization and facility expansion program underway, the oil refinery announced the construction of an entire residential quarter with 800 apartments for company employees and their families. For a city the size of Achinsk, this was a very substantial announcement that, naturally, evoked a breeze of optimism. Construction activity also gathered steam to meet needs for new housing under the framework of two regional programs: One for relocating people from dilapidated homes and another for subsidizing the relocation of people from settlements in the Far North (Ministry of Construction of Krasnoyarsk Krai, 2011). While not associated with Rusal, these developments demonstrate the city’s favorable position. Against this background of relative resilience, and having established better relations with the political leadership of the country and the region, Rusal dedicated more attention to its growing array of social programs.

An event attesting to the move towards increased coordination between the company and the state came with the 2013 agreement to create the Center for Innovations in the Social Sphere in Krasnoyarsk, in partnership with the Krasnoyarsk Government Agency for Strategic Initiatives. Agreements followed between this new Center, the Regional Agency for SME Support, Sberbank, the Regional Ministry of Innovation and Investment, the Krasnoyarsk City Innovation and Technology Business Incubator, and Bank Soyuz. The mission of the Center was to meet the preconditions for resolving social issues through business approaches. These included supporting entrepreneurial activities, assisting SMEs and socially oriented non-profit organizations, and co-funding social partnerships – in short, to support social entrepreneurship. The articulation of a clear social investment strategy was supported by a strong increase of funding. Rusal thus not only strengthened its position in a growing policy landscape but also established the infrastructures that were necessary for coordinating its actions with the regional government.
7.3.3. Introducing urbanism and learning from it

By late 2014, it was time for a discourse on the quality of urban life to arrive and embrace the public space materialities in Achinsk. This change started with an uncanny announcement in the local press: A routine municipal announcement about the repair of a fountain was accompanied by a note adding that design variants for the fountain would be subject to public vote; this was quite novel. The reasoning that accompanied the announcement was that “Achinsk is our home; we should decide together how it will look. For many years, citizens have complained [...] we are ready to work on it together” (“Achintsy vybiraiut proekt…”, 2014). Another minor episode attesting to this shift took place during a routine visit of a minister from the regional government. There, a city council deputy requested a policy that would make people, “including myself and my children, to want to live in Achinsk” (“Achinsk nazvan odnim…”, 2015). The fact of a deputy openly expressing dissatisfaction with his personal quality of life signified a break. This and other such episodes that surfaced in local press in that period signify, I argue, a prelude to a Rusal-sponsored workshop titled “Forming a comfortable urban environment.” Moderated by Urbanika, a St. Petersburg-based research institute, the event was part of a broader project that aimed to educate municipal employees, local organizations, and individual citizens on participatory planning, to allow them to challenge the negative perception of their city and to demonstrate urban design solutions that could be applied on location and make Achinsk a desirable place to live. This, in turn, was a prelude to the Federal Program under the same name (CUE) that would soon be launched across the country.

The workshop sessions received extensive coverage by local media and Rusal’s press service. Much effort was placed into encouraging citizens to participate in the analysis of problems and suggestions for solutions. A local news portal even launched a dedicated webpage to host citizen opinions, while other media articles circulated optimistic statements about the joint efforts of St. Petersburg experts and Rusal to bring what was termed “European comfort” (“V Achinske planiruiut…”, 2015) to the city. From his

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89 The term “urbanism” rarely appears in Rusal press releases, promotional material, media accounts, or local news, and only since the late 2010s. The word “urbanism” will nonetheless be used here as it accurately depicts much of this activity even in its first stages: An indication of translation being performed but not being framed as such.

90 “It is now fashionable [...] for developers: Providing not just housing, but also a comfortable urban environment, where people spend more time on streets and in parks and don’t hide at home” (“Vlasti i biznesmeny…”, 2015).
side, the mayor welcomed the workshop and a series of sessions for improving the city’s environmental conditions: to him, the era of conflicts was over and Rusal had now “turned its face to the city” (“Ekologicheskie problemy …”, 2015). The company also emphasized the idea to enrich the new urban strategy with ideas submitted to the Territory Rusal program (CSP, 2015).

Urbanika experts demonstrated the toolkits of contemporary urban policies that could help small Siberian cities, putting forth the motto “big changes come with small steps” (“Achinsk na poroge peremen…”, 2016), which is typical of contemporary tactical urbanism principles. In practice, this strategy “should become a platform for positive urban changes uniting the efforts of business, authorities, noncommercial organizations, and residents to promote city development” (Rusal Sustainability Report, 2015: 102). In the long term, this would generate the revenue necessary to proceed with financing the construction of sports and cultural facilities. These first small improvements were to include the transformations of the embankment, the pedestrian areas in the historic center, and the railway station square. The public demand for improvement of the embankment that had been voiced a decade earlier (described in Ch. 7.3.1) finally found its place in formal policy. Interestingly, a similar suggestion to redevelop the city park and the embankment had been submitted in 2013, in a research report ordered by Basic Element, a Deripaska-owned company. In a later elaborations of this strategy, several key public spaces requiring renovation were identified. These included the city’s central landmarks and public spaces but also a few less central areas.91 Based upon this programmatic set of actions, processes of urban renewal and participatory financing followed in the next years as part of Rusal’s social programs.

As a result, the city’s urban strategy, prepared by Urbanika and sponsored by Rusal, was published on the municipal website (City of Achinsk, 2016) and presented as a model for urban renewal in industrial cities at the 2016 Architecture Forum in Krasnoyarsk. The regional government emphasized the importance of cooperating with Rusal for the common good and associated the improvement of the urban quality of life with the improvement of human capital in cities. This expression of causality indicates an appropriation, by higher political figures in the region, of a new problematizing whereby the provision of a high-quality urban space itself becomes consequential to growth and therefore, a policy objective. The city council was

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91 These were Palace of Culture Square, Kravchenko Avenue, Bogatkova Boulevard, Victory Park, Railway Station Square, Lenin Street, and Aviators’ Quarter.
reportedly urged to utilize this plan to introduce changes in urban policy legislation and to integrate it into future applications for federal and regional funds (“Zhiteli Achinska obsudiat …”, 2016).

Both the institutionalization of new urban policies and their instrumentalization to upgrade the position of the city in relation to state funding mechanisms by demonstrating adherence to contemporary urbanistic principles eventually resulted in a change to the established paradigm in the small locality. With this workshop and a series of follow-ups that set the fundamentals for strategic planning and stepwise action, Rusal effectively sponsored the transfer of ideas and policies in Achinsk. This sponsoring was now backed by significant material support from the company’s social programs as part of an updated, far more generous agreement with the city for the 2015–2017 period.92 The next section explores the output of this compromise.

7.4. Translation outputs

7.4.1. Localized social responsibility

With a generous increase in funding and a clear emphasis on quality of life, the social programs of Rusal would now spread urbanism in small-town Siberia. New programs were introduced: The School of Social Responsibility and the School of Urban Change promoted volunteering and social entrepreneurship. The most important change in the Territory Rusal program was a clear reorientation towards public space design and landscaping. Press releases emphasized that the contest committee would from now on be composed of “specialists in urban planning, architecture, [and] design” (CSP, 2016a) with selection criteria set accordingly. Experts, including a well-known Russian urban sociologist, were invited to Krasnoyarsk to discuss participatory urban planning and to consult with those interested in formulating project proposals. Territory Rusal was enriched with additional design contests and provided for the reconstruction and equipping of social infrastructure as well as the participatory design for courtyards, squares, and parks. The program also provided a full range of cultural events (CSP, 2017b) and expanded into urban sports so that cities in Siberia would have “bikes in every house, [for] families to spend as much time as possible outdoors in the summer” (“RUSAL prodolzhit…”, 2016). The amplified social programs em-

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92 As part of this agreement, Rusal announced that it would cooperate in tackling socioeconomic problems, attracting investments, implementing environmental measures, supporting SMEs, and upgrading facilities. This included reconstruction of a youth center, the House of Veterans, sports fields, a kindergarten, and more.
braced urban renewal in several cities simultaneously. In 2017, the company’s flagship program funded a record 108 projects, many of them related to urban landscaping: Examples included parks in Bratsk, Novokuznetsk, and Krasnoturinsk; a cultural center in Novokuznetsk; a family park, a children’s science park, and museum facilities in Krasnoyarsk; a playground in a nearby village; landscape design contests Bratsk and Novokuznetsk; and a cycling park in Sayanogorsk.

In Achinsk, projects funded by Territory Rusal covered an exhaustive range of social issues, offering entrepreneurship classes for people with limited mobility and engagement with stray animals. However, they also claimed their share of the physical urban space. The company’s turn to urbanism included seminars on urban development with the participation of design professionals who offered technical advice on bottom-up, participatory urban design, under the logo “we shall build a new city by ourselves” (CSP, 2017a). In tangible terms, Achinsk experienced the arrival of new materialities, as in the case of new sports facilities at a local college (CSP, 2016b), the redevelopment of a park in the old city center, the improvement of the park adjacent to the drama theater (CSP, 2018d), the landscaping of a plot, the creation of a small park next to a school, and the renovation of a pedestrian street in order to spark “creativity and communication” (“V Krasnoyarskom krae...”), 2017).

Parallel to such material improvements, Territory Rusal expanded into the field of culture and the organization of festivals. The first festival in the history of Achinsk to celebrate the regional Tatar, Chuvash, and Latgalian communities promoted unity with a name loosely translated as “We are different, but we are together.” The logistics of the festival indicated a conscious effort toward both the relative internationalization of Achinsk and its appeal as a regional pole in central Siberia: The Latgalian choir arrived from Latvia for the event, while the Chuvashian folk were brought in from nearby Chuvash settlements. In other cities, the company launched audiovisual spectacles to celebrate Metallurgist’s Day.93 Such festivities, customized to match the local context of highly industrialized, mono-functional mining cities, again illustrate Rusal’s attempt to enhance its presence in small localities, with small gestures carrying a high symbolic value.

The company was equally active in enhancing its environmental profile and streamlining relevant actions. Cultivated earlier in the cases of mo-

bilizing, for example, employees and young volunteers in a river clean-up campaign, environmental action was now reorganized into a complete eco-day with events and contests to raise awareness for environmental protection, to promote healthy lifestyles, and to popularize the history of the river (CSP, 2016c), thereby also enhancing local environmental awareness and encouraging civic identity.

In 2018, the company’s endeavors went further. “Territory Rusal” was restructured into five distinct contests whose names evoked the promise of an entirely new urbanism for Siberia: The “Comfortable City” contest would promote new public spaces; the “Active City” would facilitate community dialogue; the “Future City” would educate youth; the “Attractive City” would enhance the tourist potential in small cities; and, finally, the “Healthy City” denomination would promote healthy urban lifestyles (CSP, 2018a). Similarly, the “Green Wave” program awarded landscaping projects in smaller towns. Terms such as “community planning” and “urban heritage” formed an endless list of novel buzzwords in the company’s press service and the media. Not only did they thereby introduce urbanistic policy tools that were on par with the ongoing international discourse; their deployment also underlined the company’s crucial role in local social development.

In Achinsk, the renewed cooperation agreement between Rusal and the city administration allocated funds for the landscaping of two parks and the upgrading of children’s sports facilities and an exhibition center. These small-scale developments are illustrative of the shift that was spreading across small-town Siberia, with the company and state authorities solidifying their relationships.

7.4.2. Local compensation(s): The territorial dimension

It should be emphasized that this full and novel activation of local-scale urbanism as part of a social program became tightly interwoven with the long-term development strategy of Rusal, which, in turn, gradually became integrated with regional development strategies in Krasnoyarsk Krai. For example, an early emphasis on social entrepreneurship in association with local and regional economic growth appeared in a 2013 report prepared by a

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94 In eleven regions: Krasnoyarsk (Achinsk and Achinsk District, Bogotol and Bogotol District, Divnogorsk, Krasnoyarsk, Nazarovo and Nazarovo District, Taezhny Settlement, Sharypovsky District), Volgograd (Volgograd), Irkutsk (Bratsk, Tayshet, Shelekhov), Kemerovo (Novokuznetsk, Belogorsk), Leningrad (Boskitogorsk), Moscow, Murmansk (Kandalaksha), Samara (Novosemykino), Sverdlovsk (Kamensk-Uralsky, Krasnoturinsk, Severorauls), Karelia (Nadvoitsy), and Khakassia (Sayanogorsk) (CSP, 2018b).
Moscow-based research institute for the industrial group Basic Element (controlled by Deripaska). In it, Achinsk is described as a city with underutilized investment potential and a weak SME sector (“Bazovyi Element razrabotal…”, 2014). Governmental reports came to similar conclusions, emphasizing the need for the economies of both the city and the region to escape single-industry profiles, raise local demand, promote a healthy SME sector, and aim for a value-added economy (City of Achinsk, 2007; Government of Krasnoyarsk Krai, 2012). In the same vein, Rusal posited the need for stimulation of domestic demand and for import substitution in its strategy, linking these to sustainable development (Rusal Sustainability Report, 2015: 40).

This also touched upon the territorial dimension: Deripaska’s earlier statement about relocating the country’s capital from Moscow to the east in order to redirect development towards the regions can be seen as a sensational claim. However, it did echo regional initiatives and discourses such as the Eastern Vector, which sought to articulate a discourse on Siberia as the future center of Russia’s economic relations with Asia (see Efimov et al., 2014). It also matched Deripaska’s strategy towards an “overhaul of the metallurgical industry in Eastern Siberia and its reorientation to Asian markets” (Korolev, 2016: 64), in the process of which Rusal had entered the Hong Kong Stock Exchange and acquired assets on the Chinese metals market. The vision of an internationalized Siberia once again cut through the “Yenisei Siberia,” a grand regional investment program launched in 2017 by Krasnoyarsk Krai, the Republics of Khakassia and Tuva, and the three main regional industrial enterprises: Rusal/En+, the Siberian Coal Energy Company, and Norilsk Nickel. The three companies, controlled by Oleg Deripaska, Andrei Melnichenko and Vladimir Potanin, respectively, pledged to contribute approximately 9 billion EUR by 2025, a very large amount in relation to the size of the regional economy. Yenisei Siberia was described by the governor as a breakthrough that would streamline the transition of Siberian enterprises into a flexible management model (Saveliev, 2020). Rusal expressed the intention to support SME growth and aid the transition towards complex, added-value product development. In addition, it stressed its commitment to Eastern Siberia by announcing that it would transfer its headquarters to Krasnoyarsk. The news spurred enthusiasm in the local media as it appeared that a Siberian city would host global functions for the first time in history, thus becoming a truly globalizing city in a territory long deprived of agency.

Over the course of a decade, Rusal demonstrated an affinity for socio-economic development in towns and cities. Part of this affinity was directed
towards the materialities of urban space, for whose improvement contemporary urbanism was put forth. This building of translations of policy models grew exponentially into concrete programs aligned with territorial development objectives.

The spatial expansion and qualitative development towards the corporate-led translation of an urban policy model was further complemented by federal policies in support of social entrepreneurship and volunteering. Indicative of this shift was the 2016 presidential address to the Federal Assembly, in which Putin called for the removal of “all barriers to the development of volunteering” and for the provision of comprehensive assistance to socially-oriented non-profit organizations (Putin, 2016). Rusal’s social programs continued to receive federal grants and awards in the fields of corporate leadership and the development of civil society (CSP, 2018d):

Practically, then, by the late 2010s, Rusal can be seen as having established structures of corporate governance that offer material resources and a policy knowledge framework to existing municipal urban policy structures, while enhancing its own profile in the region. The birth of urbanistic discourses and participatory policies in this context goes beyond simply establishing a corporate social responsibility program; I argue that it articulates a system of compensating acts in the field of urbanism and on a territorial scale, covering small towns and large cities in Siberia and the Urals.

7.4.3. Globalization backfiring

While becoming increasingly intertwined with regional development strategies, the company’s social programs and region-specific corporate local urbanism proved vulnerable to external shock—shock that came in the form of U.S. sanctions imposed on Oleg Deripaska and, consequently, Rusal, in April 2018. The application of the sanctions on the company was, however, postponed, and they were lifted after a compromise with Deripaska. Regardless of the oligarch’s (ongoing) international legal battles, the reaction to the announcement of the sanctions was proportionate to the regional significance of the company: Official sources did not rule out default on the part of Rusal (“Tekhnicheskii defolt…”, 2018), and the company’s stock price plunged upon the announcement of the sanctions (“Deripaska’s Rusal roiled…”, 2018); local media advanced worst-case scenarios, including the freezing of all announced investments, social instability, and a rise in unemployment, and literally referred to a war being waged against the Russian
aluminum industry and the Siberian economy. Aluminum industry employees even gained international attention with reports on agony in small-town Siberia (“U.S. Sanctions Cast…”, 2018). Indeed, some social projects faced retraction due to “circumstances beyond our control” (“Fond Deripaski…”, 2018). The expansion of the socially responsible company across small localities was now under threat due to an international event outside the purview of local actors. The events of April 2018 proved that physical distance did not offer the Siberian elsewheres any kind of immunity against the upheavals that accompany economic globalization. Moreover, I would argue that the programs were threatened by the very internationalization that had made their formulation possible.

Once Deripaska formally stepped down from Rusal, the company sought to speed its shift towards Asian markets, namely the APR and southeast Asia, as well as its infrastructural expansion in eastern Siberia (see Ch. 7.2.1) in the hopes of attracting investments from China and promoting the Yenisei Siberia program. Moving Rusal’s jurisdiction from Jersey, UK to Russia was also considered following federal legislative changes regarding special administrative regions. The newly announced special economic zone on Vladivostok’s Russkyi Island was proposed as the new location (see Ch. 5.3). The company’s socially responsible profile endured and was enhanced, as was the intertwining with regional and federal objectives (CSP, 2018c). The new CEO stated that the company remained dedicated to providing “comfortable conditions for business and living” and pledged that all social projects in Krasnoyarsk would continue. This affirmation supports earlier studies such as Allen Scott’s, which argued that regional economic systems would foster “agglomeration-specific technological research activities […], protection of certain kinds of infant industry, investments in upgrading workers’ competencies, and the cultivation of collaborative interfirm relations” (Scott, 1998, in Scott, 2001: 821). A decade after Scott’s study, Rusal appeared to be eager to undertake this role in central-eastern Siberia.

Alongside the company’s maneuvering at the global and regional levels, an array of actors was practicing small-town Siberia’s new, localized urbanism. Since the mid-2010s, these actors had been navigating in a complex landscape of knowledge transfer and its translation and implementation into strategic thinking. Their “cultural conceptions, systems of understanding and systems of meaning” were changing: “It is more than just producing collect-

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95 Worst-case scenarios did not materialize in Krasnoyarsk or in Achinsk. However, the sanctions did have some direct consequences, as in the case of the shuttering of the (already poorly performing) Nadvoitsy plant in Karelia (“Rusal nachal konservatsiu…”, 2018).
ive decisions. It is about shifting and re-shaping convictions” (Healey, 1997: 244–245). This shifting and reshaping also occurred in the small locality examined here.

7.5. Actors as improvisers

7.5.1. The contemporary company

The duality observed in resource distribution in the 2000s, with a delocalized, mobile, wealthy corporate presence contradicted by local scarcity, is visible in the existence of two blocs of actors whose distinct actions remained constant in the 2010s.

The first bloc consisted of regional and federal authorities, the oligarchic structures around Oleg Deripaska, the higher managerial cadres of Rusal, and their array of legal advisors, strategists, and consultants. It is important to note that none of these people resided in the city in question. The second bloc consisted of municipal authorities, the managers of the Achinsk alumina refinery, and plant employees, all of whom were spatially grounded in Achinsk.

The first group of actors has traditionally exerted control over the latter as it stands atop classic political and corporate hierarchies and decides how resources are allocated. At the higher echelons of political power, the communication channels between regional authorities and the higher management of Rusal (or other companies such as Norilsk Nickel) have been direct and cultivated over a long period of time. As described in Chapter 7.2.2, this communication has included both partnerships and conflicts as well as tensions and dependencies at the local level.

Members of the second group have high stakes in a good urban environment, as it has a direct impact upon their personal and social well-being. Even the most privileged among them inhabit the same city, breathe the same air, and send their children to the same schools. This is due to the territorial nature of non-ferrous metallurgy: Place-based and with a highly immobile infrastructure, the industry puts significant pressure on the environment and poses risks to employees’ health and quality of life. This is the case with the Achinsk alumina refinery. For many years, the question of quality of life remained unaddressed; what happened in the city was not of interest to the first group of actors, who reside elsewhere and may never have visited Achinsk. Local voices, if they were raised at all, were ignored or suppressed. This also put the middle management in an awkward position: A newly appointed director was forced to acknowledge that conflict over the company’s municipal debts benefited neither Rusal nor the city (“Uspeshnaia 207
kar’era …”, 2006). The second bloc of actors was unable to address the deteriorating urban environment in Achinsk and was forced to tolerate and comply with processes that undermined their own quality of life, rendering those individuals more hostages than stakeholders.

The activation of the second group of actors followed the unfolding of normative change in the early 2010s. The Rusal-sponsored workshop with Urbanika can be framed as the epitome of this process, with knowledge transferred and delivered locally in order to reach the otherwise non-mobile and less knowledgeable actors. The expansion of the company’s social programs entailed cooperation with municipal authorities and company employees. This bloc of actors was required to adhere to contemporary processes and was educated in participatory urbanism. In an emergent phase in which the company was setting new urban policies, the members of this second group have been functioning as receivers of ideas and imperatives rather than their creators. With little opportunity to develop agency, they complied with top-down assignments. This compliance was translated into improvisation in that they made the best possible use of available resources. A lack of skills exacerbated this uneven relationship, but it also yielded the inventiveness that local actors employed in order to achieve the top-down tasks assigned to them. This was motivated by both professional and personal need.

7.5.2. Addressing scalability

Rusal’s local managers and municipal employees welcomed the proposals submitted in the workshop, adding that “we all live here; we care what our city looks like” (“Achinsk budet udobnym…”, 2015). But when attempting to adapt to this new reality, municipal and regional authorities often interpreted the new norms and requirements at will, and at other times they had no choice but to improvise. For example, the St. Petersburg experts had presented their new strategic approach for a stepwise transformation process in small cities and stressed the need for joint efforts of authorities, the private sector, civic organizations, and the public. However, this approach was not necessarily understood as such: When the mayor of a small city argued that “you might have to wait a long time for large investments; so you need to start improving the quality of life yourself,” (“Achinsk na poroge peremen…”, 2016) he translated participatory stepwise planning into delegating municipal tasks to citizens. Another example of deliberate translations can be seen in the signing of the social partnership agreement between Rusal and the City of Achinsk, whence the signing parties asked the citizens to be proactive because “not everything social is the lot of the state” (“RUSAL pokazal v
Furthermore, while grant applicants were requested to demonstrate entrepreneurial spirit, the company was organizing workshops to explain to them what entrepreneurship entailed. Such findings indicate the great distance between new norms and concepts and local understandings and/or translations thereof.

The urban policy experts from St. Petersburg suggested three implementation scenarios based on estimates of the coming years’ municipal budgets. Again, though, local authorities interpreted them in their own way and appeared confident that the best scenario would be implemented. In addition, an advisor to the regional governor doubled down, stating that the city would now have competitive advantages and would “turn into a model for other cities, helping to attract more federal funds” (“Achintsy vybiraiat puti…”, 2016). The determination to deliver results and the confidence in their success essentially contradicted their own relentlessly assured commitment to qualitative change in the city. With the main priority to deliver results, the quality of execution and the assessment of the end result rarely figured in discussions. As such, municipal and regional authorities held to their own rationale while adopting a vocabulary that implied a different one.

Implementing projects co-funded by Rusal in the cultural sphere additionally revealed that, in the process of materialization, municipal employees were asked to take similar action: Drama theater employees, for example, had to be retrained as designers and supervisors in order to secure further funding for future landscaping and the building’s renovation (“Obnovlennyi skver…”, 2018). Beyond the positive coverage of the process in local media, this represented a peculiar translation of the concept of PPP whereby municipal employees received grants on the condition that they, in the absence of other skilled people, act as project managers. Though municipal workers were required to make good use of the funds available to them, citizens’ response to the participatory urbanism experiment that was launched alongside the CUE was lukewarm. In contrast to flashy official announcements hailing the public’s enthusiasm, the reports of public discussions reveal a different picture, with the city architect wishing to see “participation, and not only by the elderly” (“V Achinske uchitivayut…”, 2018). Photos, too, show few participants.

This resonates with earlier research positing that, despite the optimistic idea that the shift from government to governance produces more active and responsible citizens through participation, it does not improve the situation of unequal access to power at the community and state levels (Swyngedouw, 2005). This brings me to the question of scalability and the contrast between
expectation and reality. In the comment quoted above, the city architect is expressing a desire for more civic engagement; indeed, this corresponds to my personal observation of a large number of press releases for various events by the company’s CSP in the mid-2010s—that is, the contrast between an inspiring, positive, and motivating message that builds anticipation (as in CSP, 2017c) and the reality of low levels of participation. Such events used to draw only a handful of participants, usually company employees or municipal department staff. When asked what she thought of the company’s programs, a younger lecturer noted that:

they lack the skills; they don’t have such people [project managers]. Besides, much of what is happening is not really CSR – that’s an empty word, everyone knows this. [...] Much of it is for tax benefits and such. (Interview 30)

Despite being an outsider’s opinion, this view is representative of a general attitude which does not find its place in the positive announcements. Viewed through this lens, improvements in the urban environment were not necessarily the principal goal of such policy sets. Policies prepared with low awareness of or interest in practicable scalability yet demanding results according to fixed deadlines had left local stakeholders with few choices other than to simply delivering the results. This became the sole objective, regardless of the quality of the outcomes.

7.5.3. Stakhanovite urbanists

Local stakeholders’ responses to the CUE illustrate a similar preoccupation with delivering results. The mayor of Achinsk was key in this regard. A characteristic figure with many years of managerial and leadership experience in the aluminum industry before his entry into regional politics in 2001 and his assumption of the mayorship in 2007, Ilay Akhmetov had a long history of securing funds from various sources. The results of his efforts, however, were usually left half-finished and inconsistent with a structured plan for improvements in the urban environment. The mayor’s attitude towards the program’s requirements for establishing PPPs for urban renewal was similarly typical of a bureaucrat trying to adapt to the demand to act flexibly, horizontally, and entrepreneurially.

The day of the 2018 presidential election was also the day of a nationwide vote to choose public spaces to be renovated in the framework of the CUE.

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96 This is a reference to “Stakhanovite,” a term coined in the 1930s to describe Soviet workers who were exceptionally hard-working and productive.
At the local level, this peculiar association of participatory processes and national duty was embraced by Akhmetov, who urged citizens to decide the fate of both the country and one square in the city. Attempting to adhere to the program’s guidelines for PPPs, he lobbied Krasnoyarsk Railways to co-fund a square renovation. On another occasion, the city council decided to landscape a privatized park and forced the owners to submit a landscaping plan and co-finance its implementation, again demonstrating a successful PPP for urban renewal in Achinsk. Finally, although the allocated funds were insufficient, the mayor managed to reduce expenses and include the renovation of an additional courtyard as part of the CUE.

These attempts to conform to a new urban policy paradigm apparently necessitated the deployment of novel practices. On one occasion, municipal employees were asked by the mayor to take to the streets and discuss the quality of urban life with people. Similarly, municipal deputies were ordered to empirically assess the beauty of the city’s newly designated scenic routes in an attempt to establish a tourist infrastructure in a city which hitherto lacked it entirely. On other occasions, regional and municipal authorities could be seen personally supervising contractors, observing deadlines, heightening awareness of the project among the public, and boasting about the positive effect of participatory processes.

This embedded logic of overly zealous delivery of top-down assignments survived the new policy paradigm. Notwithstanding the introduction of participatory planning processes and voting, the mayor alone decided to renovate two squares instead of one, insisting that he would secure additional private funds. Summarizing the municipal approach to new urban policies, one cannot speak of the entrepreneurial mayor in the post-Soviet city, but rather of a mayor addressing the demands of a changing policy landscape by projecting a post-Stakhanovite zeal.

This obsession with delivering can extend into the company’s social programs themselves: The rejuvenation of public space, both in its materialities and by temporary events, festivities, and community-building actions, following 25 years of free-fall decline and neglect of the notion of quality public spaces (see Figure 7.1), is remarkable indeed. The wisdom of investing precious resources in myriad ephemeral social events with low attendance in a city with other, objectively more urgent needs is, however, questionable. Numerous similar examples leave an observer puzzled.

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Characteristically, by 2016, the city’s museum was the only institution with an elementary grasp of tourism in Achinsk. According to its registry, the city had been visited by approximately eighty foreign visitors in the course of the year (“Achinsk sdelaiut bolee…”, 2016).
While Rusal’s social programs and its participatory urban policies appeared to work toward the common good, the company itself consistently acted against it. The Achinsk aluminum refinery caused extensive environmental pollution and casually got away with it, and Rusal was officially declared a leading polluter in Siberia (Ch. 7.2.3); it simultaneously started funding river clean-ups and eco-marathons in the city as part of its new social policy. How can one make sense of the discrepancy between a grim reality and glossy press releases? Considering on-site observations but also months of following media coverage of new urban policies in Achinsk, the discrepancy appears to be embedded in these actions: In most cases, only a handful of people appear to have participated. For the most part, observations and readings indicate that these events did not evoke particular interest among the public. Similarly, the Territory Rusal contest might have been enriched with an urban design component, and the company might have boasted a contest committee consisting of experts (see Ch. 7.4.1), but there was no such expert on the committee in Achinsk; the list of committee members included only municipal and regional politicians and Rusal staff.98

Furthermore, events which are highly context-specific in this industrialized part of Siberia, such as the Metallurgist Day celebration, were now enriched with novel, rather out-of-context activities such as flash mobs and crowdfunding workshops. The multitude of similar events reveals a pattern that represents nothing more than the translation and introduction of fashionable concepts into locales that were not fond of them. For instance, the public voting for the 421 projects submitted to the 2017 Territory Rusal contest reportedly attracted 60,000 voters. But after almost two years, the video instructions on how to submit an application to the contest (Urbanika, 2017) had not exceeded 350 views. That number is smaller than the number of awarded projects, not to mention the improbability of 60,000 people voting in a contest with less than 1% of them having watched a relevant video.

On the other hand, cultural events such as film festivals in small cities that lack a cinema are undoubtedly meaningful.99 In addition, one individual who clearly benefited from the introduction of new urban policies in Achinsk was

98 The company listed as experts the Deputy Head of Achinsk, the Chairman of the City Council of Deputies, the Head of the Press Service of the Alumina Refinery, the Deputy Head of Achinsk District, the Head of the Local Branch of the Support of Russia, the head of the city, and a representative of the Council of Deputies of the Achinsk region (CSP, 2016a).

99 The company reported on the festival’s expansion from four main cities to several smaller localities (Taishet, Taezhny, Achinsk, Kamensk-Uralsky, Krasnoturyinsk, Severouralsk, Kandalaksha, Nadvoitsy, and Boksitogorsk), aiming to involve people there in contemporary culture and creativity.
the city architect, who appeared thankful for the knowledge transfer, stating that the St. Petersburg experts:

helped us draw a pattern; we need to refine this and translate it into drawings for each section. This is a great assistance for our department [...], an individual strategy specifically for our city. (“Achintsyi vyibyrayut puti…”, 2016)

Such oxymora in the course of building a socially responsible corporate profile can be traced back to the double-sided mode of development in the history of Siberia. The otherwise obvious discrepancies between proclama-
tions and output, assumed needs and provided solutions, PR strategies and real engagement, however, represent the reality in which Siberian development has historically taken place (see Ch. 4). In the case of Rusal in Achinsk, it was only after the first block of delocalized actors sought international legitimacy by instituting a contemporary social responsibility program that change was registered at the local level. This occurred with little consideration of scalability between international policies and local realities, explaining the rush of local actors to follow the new imperatives. Activities such as open-air yoga sessions appeared in Achinsk because this was part of a policy model transfer, not because it necessarily interested people. The appropriateness of an activity is no less important than its performance, which often took place for its own sake. This shows that the policy model was only partially complete: It failed to include the elemental component of participation. Its translation was conditioned by local specificities including embedded practices of corporate window-dressing, a precedent of resource scarcity or plundering, and the de-territorialized character of the leading bloc of actors. Once again, this attests to the double-sided nature of the relationship between the corporation and the locality it purportedly sought to assist in translating participatory processes and promoting civic awareness of specific urban matters.
Figure 7.3. Territorializing new urban policies: The main settlements (cities, towns, and villages) in which Rusal’s social projects with an urbanistic component have taken place since the early 2010s. The high concentration in the areas adjacent to the Yenisei River is visible.
Finally, the captivating name of the flagship project Territory Rusal is itself indicative of the company’s goodwill in reconstructing public spaces and providing social amenities. However, another interpretation of the name also highlights a component of possession because, linguistics aside, the contest takes place in areas objectively dependent on the company, as illustrated by the 2018 U.S. sanctions. Perhaps the contest’s name, then, makes a subtle claim on the territory itself: Rusal’s Territory. With public officials in cities such as Achinsk being lectured on managerial governance and civic entrepreneurship, and in the face of the gradual replacement of municipal budgets with funds pulled from a corporate social responsibility scheme, it is reasonable to argue that – as company strategy blends with regional development programs such as Yenisei Siberia (see Ch. 7.4.2 and Figure 7.3) – the company is claiming an authoritative role for itself in the territory.

7.6. Conclusions: Compensatory spaces

This chapter has examined the translation of a process for urban renewal into a contextualized policy model as part of a corporate social responsibility program applied in a peripheral setting. The analysis shows that this process of translation has consisted of (a) a top-down normative change, (b) local actors with limited agency receiving external guidance, (c) limited allocation of resources, and (d) a small yet not insignificant output, both materially and with regard to the articulation of urbanism in small-town Siberia. In addition to observing the expanding policy model in a broad geographical region, I have underscored the compensatory feature of the local translation of participatory processes for urban renewal; this took place amid a scarcity of resources addressing urban space and of skillsets available to the local administrators seeking to comply with the top-down normative frameworks introduced.

The analysis highlights the local impact of changes occurring internationally, originating in the international economic integration of the Russian aluminum industry in the early twenty-first century as well as the smoothing of conflicts between the company, the Russian state, and regional authorities. The ensuing compliance with international standards for social responsibility was achieved in the 2010s in the form of the stepwise institution of a social program conceptualized in this chapter as a hyper-structure that mobilized an international policy model in several local contexts. This de-territorialized coordination of policy actively supports the formulation of new territorialities in eastern Russia, which is directly linked to the company’s acquisition of a leading role in Siberia’s changing economic geography.
The mobilization of the policy model took place by means of variegated normative changes. For Achinsk, among other localities, this has meant that post-Soviet urban policies create room for social entrepreneurship and civic engagement in urban renewal in tandem with a discreet withdrawal of patterns of authoritarian local governance. Nonetheless, both material and policy-related outcomes have been conditioned first and foremost by the scarce resources and skills. In their absence, the contextualization of the policy model, mainly by local actors who seek to transcend their roles (or at least to appear to be doing so) has yielded the consolidation of a mechanism of compensatory urbanism. This translation underlines a process of attaining contemporary urban materialities in localities both directly and indirectly exposed to economic globalization.
8. Contemporaneous peripheral junctures

8.1. A shared quest

In November of 2020, a memorandum of cooperation with regard to the development of Russkyi Island in Vladivostok was signed between two government-owned companies: The South Korean Land and Housing Corporation (LH) and the Russian company Dom.RF. Reportedly, this cooperation aimed at the joint implementation of a large real estate project, one among many state efforts to internationalize Vladivostok. Several similar projects were briefly presented in Chapter 5, but this specific incident stands out – and not only as a late encounter that went beyond the scope of this study.

Once realized, the Korean–Russian project will reportedly serve two goals: First, to provide a new, up-to-date paradigm of urban design practices in the regional capital examined in Chapter 5. In this case, as in Chapter 6, the role of Strelka CB was central in transferring ideas and best policy practices. After streamlining urban renewal processes as part of the federal program “Formation of a comfortable urban environment,” the consulting agency has already promoted its delivery of a strategy for the integrated urban development of Russkyi Island. Portrayed as a pilot project, Strelka’s latest strategy seeks to introduce contemporary urbanism into the southern edge of Vladivostok: Car-free areas, walkable neighborhoods, and compact blocks. The actor that was shown to promote urban revitalization in Chapter 6 appeared in late 2020 in a project promoting the international convergence of urban design practices in Vladivostok with a much broader scope, this time involving pronounced internationalization and an inter-regional outlook.

Second, upon its implementation, the joint LH–Dom.RF project is expected to provide an urban environment and living conditions of high international standards that would meet the needs of Russian and foreign companies upon their relocation to Russkyi Island. The answer to what type of companies would relocate to the southern edge of Vladivostok lies in the events described in Chapter 5.3.3: In August 2018, the establishment of an SAR on Russkyi Island had been announced, with the aim to repatriate Russian companies from offshore jurisdictions by offering low tax rates and
relaxed controls in exchange for redomiciliation. As stated in Chapter 7.4.3, Rusal was rumored to be one such company as early as 2018.

At the moment of this writing, the aluminum giant that used all of the advantages offered by economic globalization in the 2000s and emerged as a socially responsible actor only in the 2010s is still registered in an offshore jurisdiction. It is reportedly now among the companies that seek to benefit from the SAR scheme (Kholyavko, 2019) on whose advantages the international convergence of urban planning principles in Vladivostok is also based.

Therefore, and within this memorandum of cooperation, the main actors mentioned in this thesis seem to meet almost involuntarily, yet apparently inevitably, while acting upon their own interests, aligned under the aegis of contemporary urban policies in the periphery that is eastern Russia. They merge in the specific time and space delineated by this late 2020 cooperation agreement whose details bear an uncanny resemblance to the events described in the three analytical chapters of this thesis: First, the internationalization of the city of Vladivostok under federal command is ongoing. Second, urban policy transfer with a regulatory element is involved, as with the actions towards the protracted revitalization of Krasnoyarsk’s embankment. Finally, the entire process is causally related to the consequences of Rusal’s direct exposure to global political and economic fluctuations.

As such, not only do projects and actors cross paths and commit even more strongly to the processes presented in the previous chapters, but – more importantly – this development can be understood by means of the analytical scheme used in this study and its unique perspective. The announced joint LH–Dom.RF project can be seen as an act of confirming international convergence (as analyzed in Chapter 5), an act encompassing the notion of understanding urban design as a paradigmatic, regulatory instrument (as presented in Chapter 6), and an act promising to de-globalize and redomiciliate the aluminum company that recently offered compensatory, localized urbanism for eastern Russian localities (as shown in Chapter 7).

Having gone full circle, and with this example opening up the analysis in a broader perspective, I continue to bring the analytical chapters together and synthesize the analysis with the theoretical arguments made in the opening chapters.

8.2. Three parts of a broader process

This thesis began with an outline of some issues observed in policies addressing the formulation of physical space in cities in emerging world regions.
Using three cases from eastern Russia, the study approached policies in conjunction with the notion of translation as used in the recent policy mobility literature. Four research issues capturing dimensions of the process of urban policy formulation in the specific geographical and sociopolitical context were put forth: (a) The main moments of normative change, (b) changes in the actor landscape, (c) the resources invested in the implementation of policies, and finally, (d) the physical output thereof during the period of this study.

It is from the under-researched geographical space of eastern Russia that three processes, launched in anticipation of urban renewal, were drawn. Used broadly, the term “urban renewal” was understood to include public space transformation, plans to increase locational attractiveness, the rise of civic entrepreneurialism, the establishment of public–private partnerships in drawing urban policies – in short, not only physical changes in urban space materialities, but also the problematizing of the urban, expressed and articulated into policy, in peripheral localities.

In all three cases, the quest for urban attractiveness via the deployment of international policies and the contemporizing of physical space was evident. However, that quest was either not expressed as such or was hardly traceable in the discourses that surrounded the cases. Issues such as thin layers of actors or even difficulty establishing groups of actors, scarcity of information about resources, and conflicting information about their use hindered the framing of the processes under observation as cases in the analysis. This, however, was not viewed as problematic. After all, with the identification of the application of global knowledge into the materialities of an unknown, presumably globalizing Elsewhere, initially considered to be detached from contemporary discourses, the appearance of such gaps was anticipated. The gaps were viewed as part of the unraveling of an unrecorded story through the collection of moments of transformative change. These moments not only demonstrate efforts to adapt to policies, but also indicate simultaneous transformative processes of internationalization, contextualization, and localization.

Brought together, the analyses of these processes shed light on a turning point for urbanism in peripheral Russia in the early 2010s. Particularly in the second half of the decade, this turning point was manifested in normative changes, reconfigurations of actor landscapes, and the full (yet very conditional) alignment of local debates with international discourses. This is bringing about, I argue, a specific Russian variant of the partial dismantling or reworking of inherited institutional landscapes in order to “open up a space” for the deployment and institutionalization of new regulatory stra-
strategies in the era of “actually existing neoliberalism” (as termed by Brenner and Theodore, 2002). The analysis thus demonstrated conditionalities in the process of policy implementation, be it on the local, regional, or federal level. Therein lies one of this thesis’ main contributions: Deciphering this turning point through addressing multiple spatial scales.

This led me to refute the relevance of post-socialist theorizing today, as discussed in the theoretical part of the thesis. With the research interest of this thesis having been situated in Russia, the study began with a first assumption: Studying whether or not the search for the “institutional fix” in Moscow was complete would not necessarily inform the research aims. But if the breakdown of the all-encompassing modernistic structures was complete and had been replaced by local, inter-territorially interconnected processes even in the depths of the taiga and the localities that grew as the product *par excellence* of Soviet urban modernity, terms such as “the post-socialist/post-Soviet city” or “the city in transition” would no longer be of use to urban studies research. Rather, using McCann’s writing on policy mobilities (2017), I have shown how bits and pieces of the international urbanistic discourse were mobilized; I have also analyzed the translations produced and the consequences that these translated policies have had on physical urban space in the form of implemented policies. In the three examples presented, I have offered analyses of the ways in which actors engage in conversation, resources are mobilized, normative landscapes morph into detailed urbanistic programs, and the urbanistic component finds its way into broad developmental programs. Moreover, as this co-creation depends on assessments of the translated policies, it is predominantly local, place-based actors who seek to formulate policies based on a vision for urban life in the given cities and the futures of those cities. Based on an analysis of the relations among local, regional, and governmental agents acting in the direction of policy formulation, the analytical chapters suggested variations of adaptation dependent on the actors, normative frameworks, and resources allocated, generating the notions of convergence, regulation, and compensation as embedded in the translated policies. This is illustrated in a series of diagrams below (see Figures 8.1, 8.2, and 8.3).

The first case examines the formulation of an urbanistic discourse and policy component as an aggregate of mega-event boosterism. Chapter 5 highlights the momentum of the translation of boosterism and its impact on advancing a local urbanistic discourse; it also demonstrates that mega-event attributes were utilized to advance territorial and regional development agendas rather than the provision of place-making processes on an urban
scale. As each step toward place-making met with resistance from existing actor constellations and previous policy paradigms – resistance that even abundant resource allocation could not overcome – other actors resorted to *in situ* improvisations, taking advantage of cracks formed by means of federal and regional power duels, reflected, among other things, in the irregularities and overlaps of development objectives, resource flows, and actions. Connecting these elements to the threefold transition of (1) institutions; (2) social, economic, cultural, and political practices; and (3) the transformation dynamics of urban change (Sykora, 2012), the chapter argues that mega-event boosterism and the prioritization of new territorializations set the framework of anticipation for place-making policies. At the spatiotemporal juncture of this momentum, consistency in providing a convergent urbanism has been a consequence of the effect of a summit upon local urban policies (Figure 8.1).

![Figure 8.1. Urban policy: From boosting to convergence](image)

The identification and analysis of an instance of a managerial twist in problematizing the urban metastasizing in peripheral cities stands at the epicenter of the second case, which was dedicated to a process of drawing policies for the revitalization of a main public space in a large Siberian city. Chapter 6 demonstrates that locally elaborated normative frameworks towards public space culminated in the formulation of managerial policies. Among other things, these sought to deliver places and replace inherited
notions of space, which were discursively constructed as outdated or simply incompatible with the present and the envisioned role of the given city in an internationalized regional economy. A federal intervention that transmitted ideas and added them into the existing local policy toolkits accelerated this process. Actors demonstrated high agency and enhanced the regulatory properties of public space during its material transformation. It was demonstrated that the scopes of the federal program merged with established local frameworks and underlined the planetary prism under which local ambitions are registered, including the problematizing of the urban. This structure is supplied by the activation of entrepreneurial individuals and a managerial administration. The combined result of the application of new agential forces is embedded in the regulatory features of the revitalized public space (Figure 8.2).

![Figure 8.2. Policy knowledge: From revitalization to regulatory spaces](image)

The unboxing of managerial urban policies as a consequence of the adoption of attitudes aiming at enhanced participation is addressed in the third case. It considers the introduction of place-making by a company that initiated participatory practices following international corporate social responsibility standards. Chapter 7 illustrates how these practices have been used to assist in the deployment of a new approach to urbanism and, in turn, the gradual integration of the company into the formal urban policy framework of various localities. In order to situate such practices, local or incoming agents...
sought to reconcile the gap between an inherited space-structuring problematizing of the urban and the present place-making and to therefore facilitate the epistemic leap from the post-Soviet past and present towards an anticipated future, with a view to integrating civic voices and participatory urban design into the local policy framework as proof of contemporizing. Suggesting that the participatory policies are legitimized by international references, I trace in their mobilization an attempt, from the side of the company, to not just increase the quality of urban life but to transcend past wrongdoings by translating those policies into social entrepreneurship and civic engagement. From this view, I conceptualized these social programs as compensatory, aiming at counterbalancing or erasing the company’s recent past, allowing for the restitution of the company’s Soviet-era image as the main provider of social infrastructure while simultaneously departing from the normative approaches of both the Soviet and post-Soviet periods (Figure 8.3). For the company, following this path went hand in hand with acquiring a stronger territorial foothold. This, I argued, has consequences not only for regional institution-building on the basis on the regionalization of globalized economic activity but also for policymaking and the translation or, perhaps, indigenization of policy models.

Figure 8.3. Policy model: From participation to compensation

Taken together, the three empirical chapters trace processes of urban policy formation to reveal how translation works in an environment of increasing
internationalization of knowledge, as well as the consequences that these processes have for urban space and place. The mobilized mechanisms of boosterism, gentrification, and participation create space for three processes of convergence, regulation, and compensation, all manifested in the three selected cases of translation.

Convergence was determined by assessing the status of the urbanistic discourse before, during, and after the mega-event boosting. It was recognized when actors expressed a belief in a better future for the city when speaking of producing attractive public spaces and when tying a strong, yet still anticipated, internationalization effect to the summit. Regulation was determined by assessing the status of the urbanistic discourse before, during, and after the revitalization of the main waterfront. It was recognized when actors instrumentalized the public space in the course of the revitalization in order to promote (or exclude) specific ways of acting upon the urban with regard to its uses and roles in the given locality. Compensation was determined by assessing the status of the urbanistic discourse before, during, and after the articulation of a participatory social responsibility program. It was recognized when the company admitted wrongdoing in many of its former practices and expressed a belief in building a different future which included safeguarding and building upon the public space and social amenities in cities.

At this point, it is possible to consider the larger picture and the theoretical implications of this study with regard to translation and the formation of urban policies for place-making. The last sections of this chapter do just that; they also examine the theoretical implications that this study has sought to raise.

8.3. Synthesized analysis

8.3.1. Translation

The starting point for grounding the analytical strategy was that, inasmuch as the circulation of policy knowledge would be “structured by embedded institutional legacies and imperatives” (McCann, 2011: 109) and that one should pay attention to actors and institutions involved in new policies or in the transfers of these policies (Swyngedouw et al., 2002), the same would be valid for processes of translation of ideas. What matters, then, is how the translation of ideas matches certain needs and requirements at certain times rather than the original ideas themselves. The performance of translation, through which ideas “acquire almost physical, objective attributes; in other words, they become quasi-objects, and then objects” (Czarniawska and Joerges, 1996: 32), was crucial to this undertaking.
The analytical strategy was modelled upon the four research questions: Which are the moments of normative change in relation to problematizing urbanity and seeking out good urbanism? How do actors transform policies and perform translation, and how is the actors’ landscape itself being transformed? What does this imply for material and intellectual resources mobilized in this process? What has been the physical, material output of the process of translation? Expanding on the question of translation, a categorization coming from the recent policy mobilities literature was utilized in the identification of the cases that this thesis has investigated. This distinguished between: (1) urban policies (formally drafted and adopted guidelines and procedures setting out the long-term purposes of and addressing specific problems of governance), (2) policy models (more general statements of ideal policies, combining elements of more than one policy, or statements of ideal combinations of policies), and (3) policy knowledge (expertise or experience-based know-how about policies, policymaking, implementation, and best practices) (McCann, 2011: 109). This threefold categorization was incorporated into the structure of the analytical chapters.

8.3.2. Conditional adaptation

In the preceding three analytical chapters, an urban policy, a policy knowledge, and a policy model were subject to translation. These were conditional upon resources, actors, and norms, respectively. The translated result was one of adaptation, and adaptation was expressed, again respectively, by means of convergence, regulation, and compensation.

These three empirically generated concepts of convergence, regulation, and compensation assist in the conceptualization of the translation process. However, in order to articulate the final argument of this thesis, an additional conceptualization is here derived from those discussed above: That of conditional adaptation. Boosterism was shown to be strongly conditional upon normative choices, which translated the urban policy into a force for converging. Revitalization was shown to be strongly conditional upon actor agency and visions that translate policy knowledge into regulatory functions. Participation was shown to be conditional upon resource scarcity, which translated the policy model into acts of compensation. This, then, allows me to suggest a refinement of the process of translation. The mechanism of translation is built upon conditions, and into processes of adaptation: A normative approach that is deliberately rewritten to match geopolitical imperatives, actors who adapt to real-time challenges and resources that are channeled to compensate rather than create complex participatory structures. That is,
rather than errors in translation, these present themselves as customizations which are conditional upon the modification of the normative landscape, the adaptability of the actors, and the availability of resources. The resulting output then reflects this process of conditional adaptation rather than a more or less successful compliance with an imagined policy model.

In each of the three cases, adaptation was conditional upon different elements. In Case 1, translation of mega-event boosterism was conditional upon path norms. The adaptation was a process of convergence. In Case 2, translation of revitalization was conditional upon agential prioritizations. The adaptation was a process of regulation. In Case 3, translation of participation was conditional upon a chronic resource scarcity. The adaptation was a process of compensation. In all three, conditionalities are reflected in the physical output in public space. This concept is presented in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1. Processes of conditional adaptation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case 1</th>
<th>Case 2</th>
<th>Case 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mobilized as:</td>
<td>boosting</td>
<td>revitalizing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translation into:</td>
<td>urban policy</td>
<td>policy knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditional upon:</td>
<td>norms</td>
<td>actors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditioned into:</td>
<td>convergence</td>
<td>regulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final adaptation:</td>
<td>convergent urban policy</td>
<td>regulatory policy knowledge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Coming back to the presentation of the spatiotemporal context in Chapter 4, it bears repeating that if there is any characteristic specific to processes of urban development in eastern Russia, it is a persistent incompleteness in space and time: Developing yet always unfinished, projecting potential yet demonstrating loss. The same has been true for the processes covered in the analysis, all moving in a specific direction, yet never fully completed – everything pointing towards the wish to achieve a good city, attractive to locals and visitors alike, with public spaces that are visually and aesthetically appealing, and with civil mechanisms that are caring and bottom-up: All of the popular place-making buzzwords are mobilized, indicating a condition of contemporaneity, becoming, or attainment. As the analysis of the three selected cases has shown, processes of translation morph not into the urbanism of the
globalizing city, but into an urbanism conditional to normative change, actor agency, and resource allocation, which in turn are highly specific to spatio-temporal trajectories and a *longue durée* specific to eastern Russia.

### 8.3.3. Becoming contemporary

All three cases demonstrate an underlying intention consistent with a state of becoming. This state of becoming is interwoven with a series of actions aiming at the subversion of peripherality, through the deployment of a series of translations resulting into conditionally adapted policies generating specific materialities. This should not be confused with an attempted globalization. In this thesis, the use of the term *globalizing* does not imply a process of becoming global, but a process of problematizing the urban in a peripheral juncture of a globalized system of ideas. This partly resonates with various terms, such as “glurbanization” (Jessop, 1997), that were introduced in the late twentieth century to discuss policy transfer and urban transformation under globalization. While glurbanization suggests the collapsing of the global and the local into a globalization that takes place from both below and above (Matusitz, 2010a), the analysis offered here has suggested considering the structural unevenness in the various policy transfers.

Among other things, the way the term *globalizing city* has been used implies an open-ended process. This involves a temporal aspect, i.e. the anticipation of the moment when globalizing will be complete and cities will be global. However, this does not reflect my intention, nor does my analysis support any such claim. Indeed, as reflected in the normative changes, the agential forces, the investing of resources, and the final outputs of processes of translation, the process of globalizing is recognized as non-finite and rather offers an explanatory arena in which the processes listed above unfold. This points to a condition of becoming. In that sense, and since *globalizing* does not guarantee any transition to the *global*, at least in the way economic geographers used the term in the late twentieth century, a better designation should be sought to describe a process with a tangible endpoint in sight.

In their 2019-2020 dialogue on the philosophy of history, Latour and Chakrabarty referred to the concept of contemporaneity in addressing the current planetary condition. I adopt this concept here as well, but in a slightly different way: To Latour, contemporaneity corresponds to an almost primordial state of existence in which “distance is erased and the distinction between where people are and where they should be is broken” (Latour and Chakrabarty, 2020: 12). For Chakrabarty, on the other hand, contemporaneity today can only be seen in conjunction with the accelerated growth
in the global East and the post-colonial/developmental legacy of the main drivers of this growth, namely India and China. In those nations, he argues, modernization became central to post-war internationalism, later blended into globalization, and then transformed into authoritarianism. The echo of this process can be traced in the legacy of an “obligation to the masses” (Latour and Chakrabarty, 2020: 33), which remains central to the legitimization that those nations’ power regimes seek internally.

Of course, this discussion goes beyond the scope of this thesis. It is, however, useful to address the notion of being or becoming contemporary. In the analytical chapters, it was demonstrated that processes of urban renewal in peripheral Russia today have been revolving around a central goal: To provide contemporary public spaces whose materialities adhere to the broadly circulating definitions of middle-class leisure, social and residential preferences, and urban lifestyles. This became an official state imperative in Russia, with the formal elevation of urban renewal to a national policy in 2018. At the outset of this chapter, these elements were shown to have recently met and merged into a unified process running through a specific project. That is, concepts such as the boosting of convergence, the regulatory revitalization, or the participatory compensation eventually fall under a broader imperative that, as I have argued, is now being instituted across Russia.

This anticipation of the act of sprinkling current urbanistic policies in the peripheral junctures of globalization suggests an emerging contemporaneity that nonetheless differs from Latour’s notion of a primordial state of being. Instead, it implies an open-ended quest rooted in a belief in progress akin to the developmental thinking that has historically been so persistent in eastern Russia. Therefore, I would suggest the term “contemporaneous peripheral junctures,” whereby “contemporaneous” implies an open, temporal process of becoming and “peripheral” refers to a fixed spatial attribute.

Above, I explained how the threefold transformation of institutions, society, and spatial dynamics (Sykora, 2012) is either underway or finished and has been succeeded by a multitude of processes of becoming. In this thesis, becoming is about the constellation of actors and normative prescriptions aiming towards attaining a sort of contemporaneity which is not necessarily interwoven with globalization. This resembles Chakrabarty’s argument. If these peripheral junctures of globalization are becoming equipped with contemporary urban spaces, the underlying rationale is rather to be sought in the political terrain that he outlined, for they too are exemplary of a similar “obligation to the masses” that has been gaining ground against globalization and internationalization in Russia since the mid-2010s. While
this might be true, however, the anti-colonial background of this “obligation to the masses” in the global East only partially applies in eastern Russia, itself having been historically subjected to colonization processes from within. Rather, the sort of contemporaneity addressed in this thesis is somewhat akin to the 1950s “Europeanization of the world sans European domination” (Césaire, 1955, in Latour and Chakrabarty, 2020: 31) via the conditional adaptation of notions such as boosterism, revitalization, and participation. The three cases of policy mutations and translations studied in this thesis underlie the ongoing creation of small impulses problematizing the urban in the junctures of the international system of policymaking, thereby structuring the territory itself and doing so by creating updated urban places out of outdated urban spaces.

To return to the temporal aspect, the cases can be described as slightly overlapping, linked with a succession in time: The first covered the hosting of the first international event with mega-event attributes in the Russian Far East; the second covered the first attempt to coordinate urbanism at the federal level; the third case covered the first intertwining of a corporate social program with urban place-making in relatively isolated towns. Each of these processes has thus demonstrated a degree of contextual novelty; taken together, they illustrate the change in Russia’s domestic urbanistic discourse in the early twenty-first century. Thus, a temporal component can also be said to be a constituent of this analysis, which uncovered three processes of international policy mobilities and the formation of place out of space while not necessarily abiding by the scheme of globalization as laid down in the late 1990s. Thereby, in addition to the term “globalizing cities,” I suggest the use of the term *contemporaneity* to assist in the analysis of policy mobilities in urban studies. The visualization presented in Figure 8.4 brings these analytical concepts together.
The analysis presented in this thesis has unpacked three processes of translation of urban renewal policies. Adaptation to knowledge circuits remains conditional upon actor agency, resource allocation, and normative change. Translation remains conditional upon historical contingencies and path dependencies. It is occurring in an environment of internationalizing knowledge and ideas. As the overarching aim of local urban regimes is to appear contemporary, I have demonstrated that what emerges are spaces of convergence, spaces of regulation, and spaces of compensation among the peripheral junctures of globalization. I describe the ensuing results as contemporaneous peripheral junctures. The findings demonstrate how translations turn into policies which are recirculated, generating reordering dynamics among the subjects who adopt them and fueling changes in governance. As a result, the formative outreach of problematizing urbanity is reaching areas beyond that of place-making.

Figure 8.4. The quest for contemporaneity underlining processes of translation
8.4. Future research

This thesis addresses processes that are geographically and institutionally positioned both within and beyond the global North. The theoretical framework, on the other hand, has been a product of epistemological traditions that sit squarely in the global North. This bridging and the subsequent analysis are only representative of the broad matrix of policies to which urban spaces and places converge through actor agency, dedicated resources, and normative change. This clears a path to future research on other territorial entities in which urban policy formation signifies and is a signifier of processes of inter-city competition under finance-led globalization, whereby actor constellations seek to challenge or withhold the positioning of cities in the existing order of things.

Since the findings have both empirical and theoretical implications, they open up the possibility for further research. What do the catchy, feel-good concepts that promised the improvement of urban dwelling and flooded the “average” globalizing city in the early twenty-first century mean in practice? How do they dominate the discourse? How are they implemented, by whom, and in what normative frames? This thesis contributes to the discussion, moving on to take a first step towards a general theory of translation in urban policy under the regime of the pursuit of contemporizing. Continuing along this line of inquiry would entail expanding the current literature on policy mobilities and elevating the notion of translation to a critical factor in the study of urbanisms in order to move beyond the usual theory–practice divide and seek to better map the in-betweens. Such a development would delve more deeply into how policies appear in specific cities and how various actor constellations utilize them, as well as how these policies are justified. Again, this would need to expand upon the analytical designations utilized here, i.e. resources, agency, and normative change. Such an endeavor would be useful for studying policy not only in the areas designated as “globalizing” in this thesis, but also in the “core” knowledge production centers of the urbanistic vocabularies that have been gaining international momentum.
Summary of the thesis

After the initial chapter outlined the research problem, situated it in relation to previous research, and stated the four research questions, Chapter 2 reviewed some theoretical and conceptual points of entry into a study of the understanding of the formulation of urban environment in cities belonging to territorial entities beyond the global North. In doing so, the chapter built on the discussion of policy transfer under a (presumed) globalization; the aim of this was to offer a more thorough application of translation as an umbrella for the different acts registered in processes of policymaking aiming at the physical transformation of urban space and the formulation of place. “Place” in this thesis adopted the recent urban sociological understanding of the term applied in a context of non-centeredness rather than “peripherality” and/or “post-Sovietness.” Building toward a conceptualization of urbanism in cities still labelled as post-socialist and simultaneously seeking to overcome outdated taxonomies, the chapter assessed relevant theoretical literatures in relation to their ability to capture place-making in non-global urban environments in general. The result of this assessment was the outline of a conceptual toolkit that enabled the breakdown and analysis of urban policy formulation processes in eastern Russia.

Chapter 3 accounted for the methodological approach chosen and discussed how the different methods employed were brought together. The chapter argued that this combination of observations, ethnographic work, interviews, and the study of official documents and news material made it possible to adjust the study to accommodate the spatiotemporal multiplicities of urban policy formulation in a way that supported the description of processes mobilizing policies and producing translations and physical spaces.

Chapter 4 provided a spatiotemporal context for this study. The chapter emphasized the sparseness of eastern Russia and a historical continuity in the way its cities have been articulated in order to integrate into a territorial continuum, which has articulated them in response. This retrospective glance offered a frame with which to approach the present, which, in the case of this thesis, has concerned the processes of problematizing the urban and acting upon it.
Chapter 5 covered the case of an urban policy. Among other aims, retrofitting the city to host the summit sought to boost the city’s international outlook, as it was understood in a specific moment in the early 2000s; that is, a mega-event imperative. Similarly, the procedures that followed the summit were conditional upon an unstable and conflictual actor configuration and the regional instrumentalizations of urban governance as well as geopolitical projections. Translating urban policy was subjugated to the pronouncement of the city’s central role in the regional configuration of the Russian Far East, and the present buildup of a mechanism for boosting the international exposure of the city via the reconfiguration of its urbanity. This was crystallized into urban spaces that aimed at convergence with international examples of urbanity.

Chapter 6 described a case of policy knowledge. In analyzing the process of formulating new urban places, including the decisive impact of the CUE, I argued that this process has consisted of a series of experienced-based know-how about policies, policymaking, implementation, and best practices brought together, constantly renegotiated and reformulated, and conditional upon individual actor agency as well as resource scarcity. The policy knowledge was translated into an emphatically managerial urban governance model and an entrepreneurial actor configuration. The ensuing process leaned towards objectives emphasizing the regulatory function of space.

Finally, Chapter 7 unboxed a policy model. For the most part, the processes that morphed policy change in the direction of urbanism in urban renewal were interpretations of ideal policies, or statements of ideal combinations of policies, all of which were integrated into a corporate social responsibility program following the internationalization of the Russian aluminum industry. While addressing urban development and translating is experiencing strong momentum across Russia, in the selected small localities, the ideal participatory policy appeared as the undeniable leading force behind any normative change. Conditional upon a degree of scarcity in material and agential resources, the process of translating the policy model brought with it the notion of creating an urban place compensating for past and ongoing wrongdoings, which the company emphatically promises to leave behind on its journey to becoming a leading actor in any eastward territorial development.

This thesis offers an empirical contribution to the global South/global East discussion, as well as (to the best of my knowledge) the first detailed analysis of the articulation of urban policies in Siberia and eastern Russia following a specific recent instance of problematizing the notion of urbanity. Theoretically, the thesis has refuted the notion of post-socialism in urban studies.
as a relic of Cold War epistemological inertia. One of the findings of the analysis is that, indeed, this notion of “post”-ness has been an anachronism for almost a decade. Against this background, following the refinement of the conceptual framework, I have suggested the concept of a globalizing juncture in a regime of re-territorialization and in search of contemporaneity. A further theoretical contribution of the thesis lies in the notion of a globalizing city rearticulated into a contemporary peripheral juncture of globalization on a multi-spatial level.
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Interest in improving the quality of urban life is increasing, as demonstrated by the multitude of relevant policies that are proliferating internationally. This thesis asks how cities on the global periphery engage with the ideas that guide current urbanistic practice. The question is addressed by drawing on unique empirical material from the Russian Far East and Siberia; a multi-method research design is applied to three examples of urban policy change associated with three processes of urban renewal that pertain to the quest for internationalization, revitalization, and participatory design. The analysis follows moments of normative change, sketches the actor landscape and the allocation of resources, and captures material outputs. Analyzing and further conceptualizing these, the thesis highlights how adaptation to urbanistic practice has been linked to a recent problematizing of urbanity in the respective national and local policy landscape. Rather than relying on the analytical categorization of the post-Soviet city, this thesis argues that urban policy change can be explained in terms of the pursuit of contemporaneity. It also highlights the conditioning of the mobilization and localization of policies by the spatiotemporal specificities of eastern Russia.

Vasileios Kitsos has a background in architecture and urban studies and carries out research in the field of urban sociology. This book is his doctoral thesis.