BEYOND BORDERS

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Why do Marshrutkas Exist in One City and Not in Others?

Toward a Political Economy of Routes in Russian Urban Public Transportation

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Abstract

Urban public transportation in Russia has changed significantly since the fall of the USSR. In many cities, marshrutkas have completely replaced the classical public modes of transportation. Other cities have, however, tried to balance the electric transport system with marshrutkas. Some cities also have trams and articulated buses on their streets, with minibuses completely absent. The reasons for such huge differences are not obvious. Various approaches have failed to explain why marshrutkas are present on the streets in one city but absent in others. The hypothesis here is that the routes were privatized by marshrutka-operating companies. The conceptual framework is based on the works of Karl Polanyi, Vadim Volkov, and Michael Burawoy. Nineteen in-depth interviews were conducted in the autumn of 2016: eight in Moscow, one in St. Petersburg, and ten in provincial cities, such as Nizhny Novgorod, Kazan, Ulyanovsk, Dimitrovgrad, and Cherepovetz. Research has shown that the fundamental problem for marshrutka operators is the danger of the reconsideration of route owners' property rights. The difference between cities with and cities without marshrutkas is described not only in terms of a continuance of property rights but also through spatial characteristics of the industrial backgrounds. This view on urban public transport calls for a fresh discussion on regulation issues in transportation studies, the commodification of mobility, and the political economy of transport.

Keywords: public transport; Russian cities; route network; marshrutka; privatization; property rights; system of plan.

Introduction

A relatively new form of urban public transport called "marshrutka"[1] emerged at the beginning of the 1990s in almost every city in Russia. Unfortunately, statistics on ridership is unavailable. A 2014 travel behavior survey showed that 21% of all public transport trips were made by marshrutka [Muleev, Blinkin 2016]. Furthermore, an average tram ridership per one kilometer of tramways fell rapidly from 1,8879 thousand passengers in 1990 to 633,300 thousand in 2014 [Ry-

[1] A historically appropriate "route taxi" (*marshrutnoe taksi*) term is not relevant to the described phenomenon. Since the early 80s, "route taxi" suggests an ordinary five-seat car that carry a maximum of four passengers via an established route. In that way, a 13-seat Russian GAZ-322132 or 20-seat minibus of foreign producers is not a "taxi." Hence, the term "marshrutka" perfectly fits the purpose of this research.

zhkov, Zyuzin 2016]. In other words, urban public transportation in Russia has changed significantly since the USSR broke down.

The public transport service has changed and is currently different in Russian cities. In most cases, marshrutkas have replaced classical public modes of transportation completely in cities such as Voronezh, Astrakhan, and Tver. Other cities have tried to balance electrical transport with marshrutkas (e. g., Ulyanovsk, Samara, and Barnaul). Nizhniy Novgorod, Dimitrovgrad, and Novokuznetsk are full of 23-seatbuses called PAZ-3205 that originated from the USSR. Perm and Cherepovetz have trams and articulated buses on their streets with a complete absence of minibuses. The reasons for such huge differences are not obvious.

This study's research question is as follows: "Why do marshrutkas exist in one city but do not exist in others?" Several works of literature have provided details on several features of marshrutkas but have failed to explain the differences between the Russian cities. The goal of this research is to describe the conditions that constitute the existence of the marshrutka service. The hypothesis here is that the routes were privatized by marshrutka-operating companies. The conceptual framework is based on the works of Karl Polanyi, Vadim Volkov, and Michael Burawoy. Route as a means of production is at the center of the analysis. Empirical data were gathered through in-depth interviews.

Literature Review

Transportation systems of the "Global South" attracted a lot of attention in the 1980s [Runnacles 1976; Silcock 1981; Rimmer 1982]. The International Conference Series on Competition and Ownership in Land Passenger Transport (Thredbo conference, 1989) established a particular concept for the analysis of urban public transport. Since then, the conference followers primarily focus on bureaucratic control of contracting procedures such as market arbitration, the procurement mechanism, asset ownership, contract design, risk allocation, and contract management [Wong, Hensher 2018].

This framework of Threbo followers suggests marshrutka is part of an informal sector of the economy [Gwilliam 2001; Cervero, Golub 2007]. Observations from Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia, Jamaica, Brazil, Malaysia, and Africa reveal that the so-called informal operators are politically weak due to poor representation in official entities. The traditional management system has been highlighted in comparison to the contemporary "modern" society, with formal conditions for urban transport services and the rational management of "formal operators." Furthermore, authors have highlighted the pros and the cons of "informal transportation" in a city [Cervero 2000]. In the framework, Russian conditions are described as "fast and frequent, but chaotic and unsafe services" [Ryzhkov 2018: 2]. However, there was a shift from a deregulated regime at the beginning of the 1990s to contracting procedures in the 2000s [Ryzhkov 2018].

In the same manner, marshrutkas have been studied using the transportation system in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, as a case study [Akimov, Banister 2011].Tashkent, Uzbekistan, experienced a shift from a "shadow" economy to "normal" working conditions a decade ago. Tashkent's minibus services are organized by legal entities with no fleet ownership, and the drivers have to maintain and fuel the minibuses themselves. In addition, the drivers pay "a set, but modest cash revenue to the company, on a daily basis" [Akimov, Banister 2011: 743] for the opportunity to work in such conditions. The same condition is obtainable in Bangkok, where the functioning of the "informal transport" is dependent on regular payments to officials and police officers [Cervero, Golub 2007]. In South Africa, criminals organize urban public transport services in the same "informal" manner [Cervero, Golub 2007]. South America also has the same conditions for minibus services [Paget-Seekins, Dewey, Munoz 2015].

These features have been studied in different parts of the world using the same conceptual apparatus. Marshrutkas have also become a research problem in other disciplines. For example, Russian scholars from Volgograd carried out a research project on marshrutkas. Papers on justice [Karchagin 2014], embodied practices [Sivkov 2014], and social history [Shajtanova, Kuznecov 2014] were published with a specific focus on marshrutka mobility, while A. Sanina [2011] studied social interactions between passengers of marshrutkas in St. Peterburg. Through "fluidity" and "assemblage" concepts, marshrutkas in Tajikistan were studied as part of initiatives transforming post-Soviet everyday life [Sgibnev, Vozyanov 2016]. Caroline Humphrey [2010] tried to challenge Agamben's theory of sovereignty by using empirical arguments from her research in the Russian city of Ulan-Ude. The central argument was that criminal groups organized marshrutka-based transport services and local officials tried to challenge the situation but failed; hence, they finally decided to join the system.

In other words, many different approaches have failed to explain why marshrutkas exist on streets in one city but are absent in others. Furthermore, it is unclear why different countries all around the world face similar conditions in the "informal transport" sector. It seems it might be fruitful to turn toward the so-called critical transport studies for answers [Keblowski, Bassens, Criekingen 2016]. In short, this perspective focuses on issues related to the production of mobility rather than its consumption. Some studies in this field have studied the discussion of political groups on the possible ways to further development regarding urban transport infrastructure [Henderson 2009; Keblowski, Bassens 2017; Keblowski et al. 2019]. Others have concentrated on the historical perspective for the distribution of power on a national level [MacKinnon, Shaw 2010]. Relevant examples here are studies on bus rapid transit systems in South America [Paget-Seekins 2015] and South Africa [Wood 2015].

Participants of a three-year-long research project "Marshrutka" used the Polanyian perspective to critique "informal transport" and a "formalist" concept of Thredbo followers [Rekhviashvili, Sgibnev 2019]. Authors have also shown how the transport service is "embedded" in social and cultural norms, as well as in some particular institutions. Results of the fieldwork in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, and Tbilisi, Georgia, highlighted an argument that contracting obscures informal relationships between drivers, operators, officials, and the police. Research has shown that operator companies and the so-called route owners are the same entity. A notion of the privatization of routes emerged here; however, the idea was not elaborated.

Privatization here should be studied differently in comparison with the deregulation perspective of Thredbo followers such as Gwilliam [2008]. In the same way, studies on the economic consequences of transport development suggest the need for another conceptual framework [Flyvbjerg, Mette, Buhl 2005; Shoup 2011; Ingvardson, Nielsen 2017]. In addition, a transport-oriented political economy perspective is considered a problem within the decision-making process [Klopp 2011; Minn 2013] rather than how mobility is actually produced.

Furthermore, an important point in the Russian history of the marshrutka service is the liberal reforms that took place in Russia from the beginning of the 1990s. Studies in the field of restoration of capitalism were focused on the activities of big companies [Black, Kraakman, Tarassova 2000; Dzarasov 2014; Matveev 2019], while the local scale was underestimated. Anthropological attention to the postsocialist transformation and a concept of "involution" written by Michael Burawoy [1999] provides a relevant adaptation of the Polanyian approach to Russian conditions. In addition, research on the violent entrepreneurship phenomenon by Vadim Volkov [2002] gave a valuable illustration of how power relations intertwined in economic exchange.

Data and Methods

The fieldwork was based on in-depth interviews and the interview guide has four chapters:

— The history of local transportation (the starting point for private operator companies, agenda, changes, first legislation, negotiations, etc.);

— The influence of private companies (first entrepreneurs, fleet, cost structure, route network, connections with the local and federal government, competition, lobbying efforts, etc.);

— Issue of regulation and activities of legal bodies (first regulation procedures, reasons for it, origins of agenda, the role of passengers, contribution to the process, electric public transport, etc.);

— Transportation studies and rationality (decision-making process, research, methods, etc.).

Nineteen interviews were conducted in the autumn of 2016. Seven experts, seven employees of the operator companies and five officials took part in the survey (see Supplement). Professional contacts, as well as official requests, were used to increase the cooperation of the informants. The longest interview took 3 hours and 13 minutes, while the shortest took 43 minutes. The interviews were conducted in work-rooms, meeting rooms, parks, cafes, trams, and also on the street.

Eight interviews were conducted in Moscow, one in St. Petersburg, and ten in provincial cities such as Nizhny Novgorod, Kazan, Ulyanovsk, Dimitrovgrad, and Cherepovetz. The comparison of cities with marshrutkas and cities without this type of public transportation was a crucial condition for the research. Marshrutkas were present in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Nizhny Novgorod, and Ulyanovsk. Kazan and Cherepovetz had no minibuses, while Dimitrovgrad was serviced by the 25-seat bus PAZ-3205.

This research has investigational features and lost some important aspects such as legislative background or interviews with passengers and drivers. Perhaps an accurate case study will enrich the approach. Nonetheless, this research project should be judged as an analysis of transportation policy from an unconventional perspective.

Research Findings

Privatization of Routes

A route is a technical mediation of a vehicle through stops, streets, intervals, and specific regular ridership between remote districts of a city. A necessity for movement provokes a fluctuation of ridership, regarding its direction and volumes. Also, a route is a source of income, as people transported through a particular route pay for the service. A rapid extension of the route network at the beginning of the 1990s can be seen as a way of searching for extra profits. This notion included a single condition of developing a route network. Here, we also noticed a parallel situation to the worldwide development of tram services at the beginning of the 20th century.

There were a number of approaches for such "control of city territory by route expansion" ("*marshrutnoe osvoenie territorii*"). First, operator companies simply doubled existing routes of the municipal operators.

> Where did these doubling routes come from? Private operator companies started operation on existing routes because municipal operators lacked vehicles. (Expert, Moscow)

> In 1994–1995 [*sic*], we had to carry people, no matter what type of bus we used. (Private operator, Cherepovetz)

> There was a lack of buses. That's why private companies got routes with ease. The crucial thing here is that nobody controlled the situation. The situation was quite the opposite—officials stated that increasing the number of buses was the goal. (Municipal Operator, Ulyanovsk)

Second, the doubling of routes was made with slight changes: "For example, we have a route number 30 nowadays. This route has a long history. A private company established route number 44. This route was quite the same but 100 meters longer (Municipal Operator, Ulyanovsk)."

Third, private operators tried to "control" city territory by route expansion in outlying districts: "From the very beginning, we focused on route expansion for districts with weak or nonexistent transport services (Private operator, Cherepovetz)."

In most cases, municipal routes had stable and regular ridership. New routes suggested commercial risks for their development. In light of this, a "rolling out" ("nakatka") of new routes became a crucial initiative.

> We established all our routes by ourselves. Some of them were approved by the local administration. Two routes didn't get any further. (Private operator, Cherepovetz)

> To roll out a route, you should operate two months with losses. People should get to know somehow that you have such a route. They should know how it works, how this route connects streets. People should believe that your bus will arrive at the bus stop tomorrow. (Municipal Operator, Dimitrovgrad)

> A lot of routes we tried to roll out, but they didn't survive. (Municipal Operator, Dimitrovgrad)

> I faced a lot of examples when operator companies made a lot of effort to open a new route. However, they gave them up quickly. You can actually see a unique connection between point A and point B on a map, but the route doesn't take off. I see it as a problem of weak calculations at the preparation stage. In many cases, people just painted a line on a map. Someone tried to elaborate on this issue a bit deeper but it was not enough to establish a good route. (Expert, Moscow)

Ridership is described in terms of a natural and renewable source. It can "rise" and "fall." Ridership can be "spread out" between vehicles on a single route or by different operator companies. As mentioned above, a route may "survive" or became unnecessary. Regardless, the goal of a private operator is to "control" the paid ridership. The only limitation for success is the volume of the ridership that is "spread out" between operator companies who are doubling the routes of each other.

> A dolled-up girl came one day (to the transport committee of the city town hall). I asked, 'What do you want?' She said, 'I want to open a new route'. 'Alright', I answered. 'Let's see what you've got'. She opened a scheme and {made arms circle on the table} showed an enormous doubling of existing routes in the city center and near the Sviyaga river. 'I think you should forecast a ridership here', I answered. 'Well, Vadik and I decided this'. (Official, Ulyanovsk)

In almost all cases, local officials welcomed private initiatives on urban public transport:

> Private operators should come (to the transport committee of the city town hall) and get the passport of a route and a timetable. That's all. (Official, Ulyanovsk)

> We didn't have a legal mechanism for the distribution of routes. We came to a conference room on the eleventh floor. Roughly speaking, the route was awarded to the loudest operator. (Private operator, Moscow)

Each route in Moscow has its price: "Basically, the urban route cost one million rubles before 2008. Suburban route or interurban route cost three million rubles." (Expert, Moscow)

Officials sold the opportunity to "control" a paid ridership without any requirements. Payments were flat and did not show a dependence on supply and demand. Moreover, sometimes, official bodies welcomed the variety of transport on a route.

> One day a director of the anti-monopoly committee said that '14' route should have an ordinary bus, express bus and 't'—taxi (marshrutka). Actually, he gave a permit for marshrutkas to operate on the route. He said that increased competition in the route is better for him. That is the language of such officials. That is kind of a rule for them. (Private operator, Ulyanovsk)

The requirement to "enter the market" means a purchase of the opportunity to establish a route. However, there were no legal procedures for such transactions. "Market" here means existing but unknown volumes of regular ridership. Paid ridership had to be "controlled" in competition with other operators in order to make a profit. A quasi-legal right for commercial activity was bought from officials. Routes became a single means of production, which in some cases had to be produced.

Therefore, the process of route privatization emerged. First, private operators buy an opportunity for commercial activity in the field where only the municipal operator worked previously. Second, the outcome of such transactions suggests a risk of "rolling out" a route, then subcontracting the workforce to "control" the ridership. If the route successfully generates profits, the operator then "owns" the route.

Property Rights Support

As mentioned above, a legal framework for the privatization of a route was nonexistent. Therefore, the issue of support for property rights becomes questionable. According to the "violent entrepreneurship" definition, such criminal support emerged in the so-called business-to-business sector between equal "businessmen" [Volkov 2002]. The state failed to provide police, courts, and other entities to support property rights, so this need was filled by criminals. However, the privatization of routes suggests the emergence of business-to-government relationships. We, therefore, need to elaborate on this subject of violence within property rights.

In many cases, heads of private operator companies or "route owners" are law enforcement officials:

> I see a lot of people with epaulets... I do not mean police only, but also representatives of the secret service, military, military prosecution. (Expert, Moscow)

> The majority of private operators are ex-police officers. (Private operators, Nizhniy Novgorod)

> Each operator has someone behind him. It might be police, criminals, officials. (Official, Kazan)

> Each Gazelle has someone behind it. It might be a police officer, tax administrator or legislator of some sort. (Municipal operator company, Ulyanovsk)

During the 2000s, the system changed a little.

> City officials introduced a corrupt scheme. An affiliated operator company wins, but cannot actually satisfy contract obligations. Later this company comes to an operator who has worked here before the contract procedures and offers them subcontracting work. The affiliated company is actually a parasite, unnecessary link in the economic chain. (Private operator, Nizhniy Novgorod)

Lobbying is an important condition to support private property rights for routes. Moreover, lobbying suggests advantages in service provision through the redistribution of profitable routes to affiliated entities. There are several publications on this issue in the professional press, blogs, and Russian academic literature—for example, in Barnaul [Zyuzin 2012], Ulyanovsk [Eliseev 2013], Omsk [Grannik 2013], Saratov [Kass 2015], Syktyvkar [Bobrakov 2016], Petrozavodsk [Otkritoe Pismo 2016], Omsk [Enkvist 2016], and Ryzan [Kravtcov 2016].

This aspect, however, is contradictory. It is unclear why someone would purchase the opportunity to establish a route from officials if the officials themselves are beneficiaries of private operator companies. Moreover, it becomes more complicated when we consider the unsustainability of the property rights for routes. For example, a private operator in Chelyabinsk stated that five buses were burned in a year, and 140 tires were burst [Kochkina 2014]. In St. Petersburg, someone has attacked the minibuses of a particular private operator with weapons [Rosbalt Agency 2012]. In Ulyanovsk, all the buses that were parked in a night park were burned (Municipal operator, Ulyanovsk).

> A car with no plates stopped behind a bus. Young men (got out of a car and) burst the tires. The bus could not move anymore. You have only one spare wheel but two burst tires. If you have four spare wheels—it does not make any sense. The young men will meet at the next stop. Also, a lot of windshields were broken for a long time. You do nothing with that. You even can't find these people. (Official, Ulyanovsk)

> Marshrutka operators spend two or three years in fights and shoot-outs. Then these conflicts were decreased. They took routes, each of them has at least one route and they started to saturate them with Gazelles (Official, Ulyanovsk). Property rights support is not a sustainable arrangement. Owning a route is a matter of continuous challenge from others. Violence here became the single way to overview existing rights. Marshrutka operators highlight an absence of "long term work" and "confidence in the future." [Private operator, Ulyanovsk]

Such situations stimulates a special relationship between the route owner and the driver. Labor conditions are the key to unfold the stated contradictory role of the officials in the marshrutka service.

System of Plan

Different media recourses describe the marshrutka-based labor relationship as a "system of plan."

> There are a lot of private routes in Yoshkar-Ola city that work on a system of plan basis. The driver delivers a specific amount of money to his patron, while the rest remains with him. This revenue is not taxed by income tax duty, and it is also impossible due to the absence of cashbox control. [Zavalishin, 2013]

Omsk has a similar situation.

> You have to deliver a planned sum of money. Fuel is paid for from revenues. Maintenance is the driver's duty. The rest is a wage. [Grannik 2013]

> A simple scheme for a marshrutka business is as follows: A driver owns a minibus. Some shady agency gets a route and puts minibuses on it. Half of the earned money, the driver pays to that agency as a tribute, while the rest he spends on fuel, maintenance and a wage for himself. An agency pays officials for establishing the route. Also, they pay police and the Federal Authority for transport oversight for a lack of control. [Buslov 2013]

Kazan showed the same conditions:

> Private operators got a route with no money, no buses, actually you can establish a route with nothing except one thing. All this became possible if you visited someone and signed a piece of paper. Afterward, you sold places on that route. I came to that operator, I paid 1000 rubles, and under the jurisdiction of businessman Kolmakov, started operation with my Gazelle minibus. This happened here for quite a long time. Actually, it happened everywhere. (Official, Kazan)

The same scenario was noticed in Ulyanovsk:

> A private operator has 10 vehicles. All those vehicles have delivered a specific sum of money to this operator. If you have low capacity vehicles—you have more vehicles on a route. The more vehicles you have, the more money you get. Indeed, rickshaws here are much more profitable. This principle is simple. As a consequence of it, a high capacity of big buses is not interesting for such an approach. Everyone has a plan rate and this fact influences the whole system (of transport service). (Official, Ulyanovsk)

In most cases, drivers are the owners of the vehicles. Sometimes they maintain minibuses by themselves to save some money. The earnings of route owners are rental payments. Owners exploit a route as a means of production by allowing drivers to operate it on a daily basis: "Payment for one vehicle on a route was 50000 roubles. Sometimes it cost 60000. It was enormous money for entering the market" (Official, Ulyanovsk).

Importantly, a route owner does not pay a salary. The condition is quite the opposite—a driver has to pay the route owner for the opportunity to earn some money.

The cost structure for a GAZ-322132 operation suggests a payback period of six months. The PAZ-32053 can "earn money after one year of operation" (Official, Kazan). The biggest vehicle means the biggest cost structure. Also, a high capacity vehicle suggests a different approach to public transport service provision.

> What do you need for a profitable operation of a high capacity vehicle? Big bus facilitates a bigger interval between the service in comparison with the Gazelle. If marshrutkas were to compete on one route (a route usually operated by a big bus), then in a one-minute service period, three marshrutkas would be needed, as opposed to one big bus. That is, only a 20-second interval between each low capacity vehicle. We have such examples. There are 180 minibuses per hour on the main street in Tver city. All of them are minibuses and PAZ buses. I was sure that such a service is impossible until I saw the record. Passengers get off minibuses in the second and third lanes from the stop. It is impossible to create a stop for such a flow. PAZ buses drive on tramways and drop off passengers as a tram on the left lane of a street. (Municipal operator, Moscow)

Route owners focus on a plan rate and pay no attention to actual ridership: "Actually, the sum of money earned is blurred for owners. Of course, they are aware of approximate sums, but the accuracy is quite low. The system does not provide an opportunity to know the right sums" (Expert, Moscow).

Sometimes the definition of plan rate suggested sophisticated techniques: "We set self-made devices under seats. We made them from Chinese mobile phones. We took a keyboard and attached a 25-kg spring to it. Nine buttons increase the opportunity to know how many passengers were actually carried" (Expert, Moscow).

In other words, marshrutkas exist due to the danger of the reconsideration of property rights for routes. A daily-based plan rate for drivers and low-capacity vehicles with a short payoff period emerged as a risk reduction strategy. As far as such service continues, contracting procedures suggest bureaucratic coverage for actual privatized routes.

Marshrutkas generate cash daily. This fact is actually a fundamental one: *"*Cash! It actually doesn't matter how much. The crucial point is that you have money every day. This is a constant flow of cash with no taxes at all. It is quite hard to find the same in other spheres nowadays" (Private operator, Ulyanovsk).

The financial stability of the "system of plan" is a fundamental condition for such an organizational pattern. Nonetheless, the local government set tariffs, while marshrutka operation generates the profits. Drivers, route owners, and officials distribute the surplus among themselves. In the case of conflicts, violent methods are widely used, with no regard for the results of the contracting procedures. Drivers are responsible for all risks except for "rolling out" a route. In such an approach, officials have a unique opportunity for doubling the sources of rent extraction. First, they sell an opportunity to establish a route. Second, they support property rights for route owners. As a result, there are just two examples in contemporary Russian history of the demolition of a marshrutka-based organizational pattern. A factual nationalization of routes happened in Kazan in 2007 and Moscow in 2017.

The idea of the privatization of routes explains the constraints for its potential as an intervention. Indeed, there are few examples of one owner of routes in different cities. St.Petersburg based private operator "Piteravto" succeeded in interurban bus operations in Karelia [Piter Transport 2015a] and urban bus operation. It also took part in the demolition of the municipal bus operator in Vologda city [Piter Transport 2015b]. The essential role of lobbying efforts and affiliated officials was highlighted in this scenario. On the other hand, "Piter avto" failed to break into Novokuznetsk [Piter Transport 2015c] and Ulyanovsk (Private operator, Ulyanovsk). However, this is a unique example because, in most cases, route networks are operated by local municipal and private operator companies. The organizational pattern of marshrutka-based services suggests a close relationship with specific officials because an absence of specific people means the absence of property rights. The same argument was highlighted in the "feudal" character of the Russian regional economy [Rogov 2016] and the "suzerainties" concept [Humphrey 1991].

Post-soviet market-oriented transformation in Russia was described by Michael Burawoy as a "great involution" process. "Involution" means the demolition of production facilities due to the opportunity to gain profits through intermediary services [Burawoy 1999]. Instead of positive transformations of production, market fundamentalism leads to the promotion of "contraction rather than expansion of output, and the conservation rather than transformation of forms of production" [Burawoy 1999: 7]. Contraction in the context of an intermediary is rent extraction by route owner and official and, therefore, has the same general features. Also, the transformation of public transport actually occurred, but in an other direction.

Burawoy argued that there are two types of capitalism—industrial capitalism and merchant capitalism. Merchant capitalism and "involution" converge as Marxist and institutional concepts with the same analytical results. The anarchy in production suggests a lack of control as a problem for the absence of property rights support. In that way, a Polanyan market-based transformation and dynamism are limited. In the Russian case, the control was taken up at a local level and by violent methods [Volkov 2002].

Spatial Aspect

Marshrutka as a material object was created by interrelations between specific forms of power and labor. The organizational pattern shows the opposite structure compared to the conventional buses (and the electric public transport service). Marshrutkas became a general phenomenon in almost all Russian cities and have universal characteristics. Conventional buses, however, operate in specific spatial conditions. Nonmarshrutka cities are small towns with huge industrial facilities (such as Cherepovetz and Dimitrovgrad). Long-term property rights for route owning, with regard to private companies, is a necessity for the sustainable work of industrial facilities. Changes in the urban transport service will influence the production sector negatively if there is a disruption in the circulation of the workforce. Minibuses cannot carry a lot of people at a specific time of day from one place to another. As mentioned previously, "long-term work" and a cry for "confidence in the future" are presupposed by spatial conditions.

> We always had a single owner for a route. And also, no one took care of just their own pocket. (Municipal operator company, Dimitrovgrad)

> The route of a tram is not doubled nowadays. Bus operators have not tried to get tram passengers. (Private operator, Cherepovetz)

The public transport service in such cases is based on an approach originating from the USSR. Unlike the "system of plan" approach, such private companies own and maintain their fleet, hire drivers, pay taxes, provide medical examination, and so on. Such companies have more than one operation route and sometimes apply a cross-subsidy approach where loss-making routes are compensated for by profitable ones.

Discussion

The fundamental problem for marshrutka operators is the danger of the reconsideration of property rights of route owners. A route is a mediation between the vehicle and the mobility of people. Paid ridership is essential for marshrutka operation. The difference between cities with marshrutka and cities without is described not only in terms of the continuance of property rights but also through spatial characteristics.

This contemporary view on urban public transport calls for a fresh discussion. For example, issues such as "market" for public transportation and how regulation obscure informal relations between participants must be resolved. Answers to such arguments can influence the mainstream approach to public transport regulation in general [Gwilliam 2008] and in terms of competition "in" the market or "for" the market in particular [Van de Velde 1999]. At the same time, international recognition for the system of plan existence in the "Global South" countries might be elaborated on through the privatization of routes issue. However, this argument suggests empirical findings.

As Rekhviashvili and Sgibnev [2018a] have noted, there are some interesting interrelations between Uber and marshrutka services. Indeed, route owners and Uber CEOs control a paid ridership via technical mediation. So far, marshrutka appears to be the worst public transport service, while Uber-based solutions have the appearance of being the best, even though the differences between the organizational structure of the two transport systems are small.

Privatization of routes is also a "taboo" theme in transportation regarding lobbying efforts [Gossling, Cohen 2014]. The Polanyan approach on the transformation also suggests an analytical development here either due to blurred boundaries between the concept of transformation or the opposite idea of resistance [Polanyi 1944]. In other words, the interpretation of gathered data is needed to further elaborate on the possible outcomes of different approaches to this same subject.

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Supplement

Table S.1

The Sample of the Survey

No	Occupation	Place of Interview	Region	Marshrutka Service
1	Expert	Conference room	Moscow	Yes
2	Municipal operator company	Park, tram	Moscow	Yes
3	Municipal operator company	Cafe	Moscow	Yes
4	Private operator	Conference room	Moscow	Yes
5	Expert	Cafe	Moscow	Yes
6	Expert	Cafe	Moscow	Yes
7	Expert	Cafe	Moscow	Yes
8	Госслужащий	Cafe	Moscow region	Yes
9	Expert	Cafe	St.Petersburg	Yes
10	Private operator	Director's office	Cherepovetz	No
11	Private operator	Director's office	Nizhniy Novrogod	Yes
12	Municipal operator company	Office	Dimitrovgrad	No
13	Official	Office	Ulyanovsk	Yes
14	Official	Park	Ulyanovsk	Yes
15	Official	Office	Ulyanovsk	Yes
16	Municipal operator company	Cafe	Ulyanovsk	Yes
17	Private operator	Office	Ulyanovsk	Yes
18	Official	Office	Kazan	No
19	Official	Office	Kazan	No

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