

## MOSCOW ON THE RISE: FROM PRIMATE CITY TO MEGAREGION\*

ROBERT ARGENBRIGHT

**ABSTRACT.** In this article I examine Moscow's role in the political-economic space of the Russian Federation. A broad range of data supports the thesis that the capital has become a primate city, one that serves no longer as the command center of a closed system but as the primary node of interconnection between Russia and the rest of the world. The effort to create a larger, polycentric "New Moscow" next to the ancient capital is marked by a tightening of central control, in contrast to governance regimes of European megaregions. Nevertheless, expansion of the capital region very likely will further boost Moscow's dominance over the country. *Keywords:* megaregion, Moscow, New Moscow, primate city, Russia.

Russia's 2010 census revealed that the capital's population had reached 11.5 million, an increase of 28 percent since 1989, when the last Soviet census was conducted (*Rossiiskaya Gazeta* 2011). Moreover, population experts believe that 2–5 million undocumented migrants are in the capital region (Mosmuller 2011). Moscow's rapid growth stands in contrast to post-Soviet demographic change in other large Russian cities, most of which have declined in size. For example, Russia's second-largest city, Saint Petersburg, has 4.85 million residents now, about 3 percent fewer than in 1989 and just 42 percent of Moscow's total (Rosstat 2012). Although the urban hierarchy of the Soviet Union resembled rank-size order in 1989, today Moscow's population is larger than that of the next six largest cities combined. Moscow now may be considered a "primate city" (Blinnikov 2010; Mason and Nigmatullina 2011).

The concept of the "primate city" has never been precisely defined, even by its originator, Mark Jefferson (1939). Jefferson claimed to have discovered a "law," but it is not clear whether he meant that the primate city's population must be at least twice as large as the second-largest city or twice as large as the second- and third-largest cities combined. As R. J. Johnston noted, Jefferson's original proposition "is now largely ignored, but the concepts of primacy and a primate city are still widely referred to" (1994, 473). Indeed, on the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of Jefferson's article, *Geographical Review* editor Douglas McManis called the primate city "one of the most influential concepts to emerge from modern geography" (1989).

For most urban specialists, the disparity in population sizes is but an indicator of more significant relationships. As Michael Pacione noted in his influential textbook, a primate city is "dominant not only in population size but also in its role as the political, economic and social center of the country" (2005, 673).

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✉ DR. ARGENBRIGHT is an assistant professor (lecturer) of geography at the University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah 84108; [robert.argenbright@geog.utah.edu].

However, whereas Jefferson celebrated the primate city, more recent commentators have focused on such problems as congestion and high rents. Vernon Henderson concluded that “excessive primacy strains the whole urban system” (2002, 104).

The bulk of the discussion below is devoted to revealing different facets of the Moscow region’s dominance in the Russian Federation. Of course this is not the first time that Moscow has been the leading city in the country, but its recent ascent to primacy is rather curious. Johnston noted that primacy is usually explained in terms of “the small size of the country, the export orientation of its trade, and a recent colonial past” (1994). The first and third factors do not apply at all in Russia’s case, but it is true that the country is more export-oriented than was its Soviet predecessor. Yet in Latin American countries the shift toward a neoliberal strategy for competing in the global economy has resulted in a relative decline in urban primacy (Portes and Roberts 2005). In contrast, during the past twenty years, as Russia has shifted from a high degree of economic autarky toward engagement with the global economy, the country’s leading economic center has become the overwhelmingly dominant one.

My investigation begins with an overview of the historical evolution of the country’s urban system in its national and international context. The post-Stalin period of eastward expansion receives the most attention because of its legacy in the country’s current pattern of settlement and economic activity. Especially important in this regard is David Hooson’s pathbreaking delineation of a “new Soviet heartland” emerging beyond the Volga River in the 1960s. Application of Hooson’s criteria for assessing regions shows that today the Moscow area dominates Russia. The discussion then addresses the factors that underlie the capital’s growing strength as Russia’s chief gateway to the global economy. However, certain serious “diseconomies” have emerged in the complex transition that Moscow has undergone. The last substantive section of the article examines the radical solution Russia’s leaders have embraced to overcome the megacity’s problems: construction of a new capital adjacent to the old one. At least rhetorically, the goal appears to be the development of a polycentric “megaregion” comparable to those that have emerged in Europe and elsewhere. However, because the project so far has entailed an intensification of centralized political control, “New Moscow” seems likely to manifest some very Russian forms of authority, in contrast to relatively flexible modes of regional governance in Europe.

#### MOSCOW’S RISE, ECLIPSE, AND RENEWAL

Moscow is not just a city in a country, but the city that created the country. Beginning in the fourteenth century, Muscovite grand princes and czars subjugated vast territories to their centralized rule. In contrast to the West’s politically fragmented and increasingly market-based societies, Moscow’s autocracy remained based on serfdom and universal service to the state. Even Peter I, the great modernizer, ruled as despotically as did his predecessors, if not more so. Peter wrested the state away

from the ancient capital in 1712 and rebased it in the delta of the Neva River on the Gulf of Finland. Saint Petersburg served both as the capital of the Russian Empire and as its “Window on the West” for just over two centuries. It surpassed Moscow in population and economic activity and became one of the cultural capitals of Europe. Moscow remained the country’s top transportation hub, its leading base of homegrown capitalism, and the center of what was seen as authentically Russian culture (Gritsai and van der Wusten 2000).

In 1917 Vladimir Lenin relocated the new Soviet government to Moscow, not out of appreciation for authentic Russian culture but because of its more secure central location. The new regime became highly centralized and bureaucratic, both of which factors induced growth of the capital.<sup>1</sup>

These trends intensified when Joseph Stalin undertook an unprecedented, state-directed development drive. While overseeing collectivization and industrialization in the country, Stalin also took great interest in Moscow’s development, especially its monumental spaces; for example, the metro and the famous “tall buildings” date from his reign. Persecution and turmoil in the countryside spurred some 23 million peasants to relocate to Soviet cities between 1929 and 1939, including almost 2 million to the Moscow area (Hoffmann 1994). Other industrial cities also swelled in the 1930s, including new centers in the Urals region and Siberia. The latter experienced an intense growth spurt in 1941–1942 thanks to the evacuation from European Russia of industrial facilities and personnel. After World War II ended, Moscow continued to grow as the political-administrative capital of the Soviet empire, the leader in education and the arts, and the largest single industrial center in the Eastern bloc, but at the same time both Nikita Khrushchev and Leonid Brezhnev continued to push eastern development in harsh environments to an extent unmatched in other northern countries.

#### HISTORY OF A HEARTLAND

In 1962 Hooson published “A New Soviet Heartland?” in the *Geographical Journal*, and two years later he elaborated on the topic in a book with the same title. He identified the huge area stretching from the middle course of the Volga River to Lake Baikal as an emerging heartland primarily because of its deposits of vital natural resources and its rapidly growing population (Figure 1). Hooson took as his inspiration the “heartland thesis” of Halford Mackinder, which in its simplest form was that the power that ruled the Eurasian heartland could rule the world. Mackinder considered it “inevitable that a vast economic world, more or less apart, will there develop inaccessible to oceanic commerce” (1969, 168). And, indeed, by the early 1960s the Soviets had developed “a vast economic world” that was largely self-sufficient. This was the context in which Hooson’s “new heartland” thesis should be understood because this massive economic transformation made his heartland new and different from Mackinder’s.

Hooson assessed the Volga-Baikal area as “Effective National Territory,” a term that evidently originated with Preston James (1959, 11). Hooson refined the con-

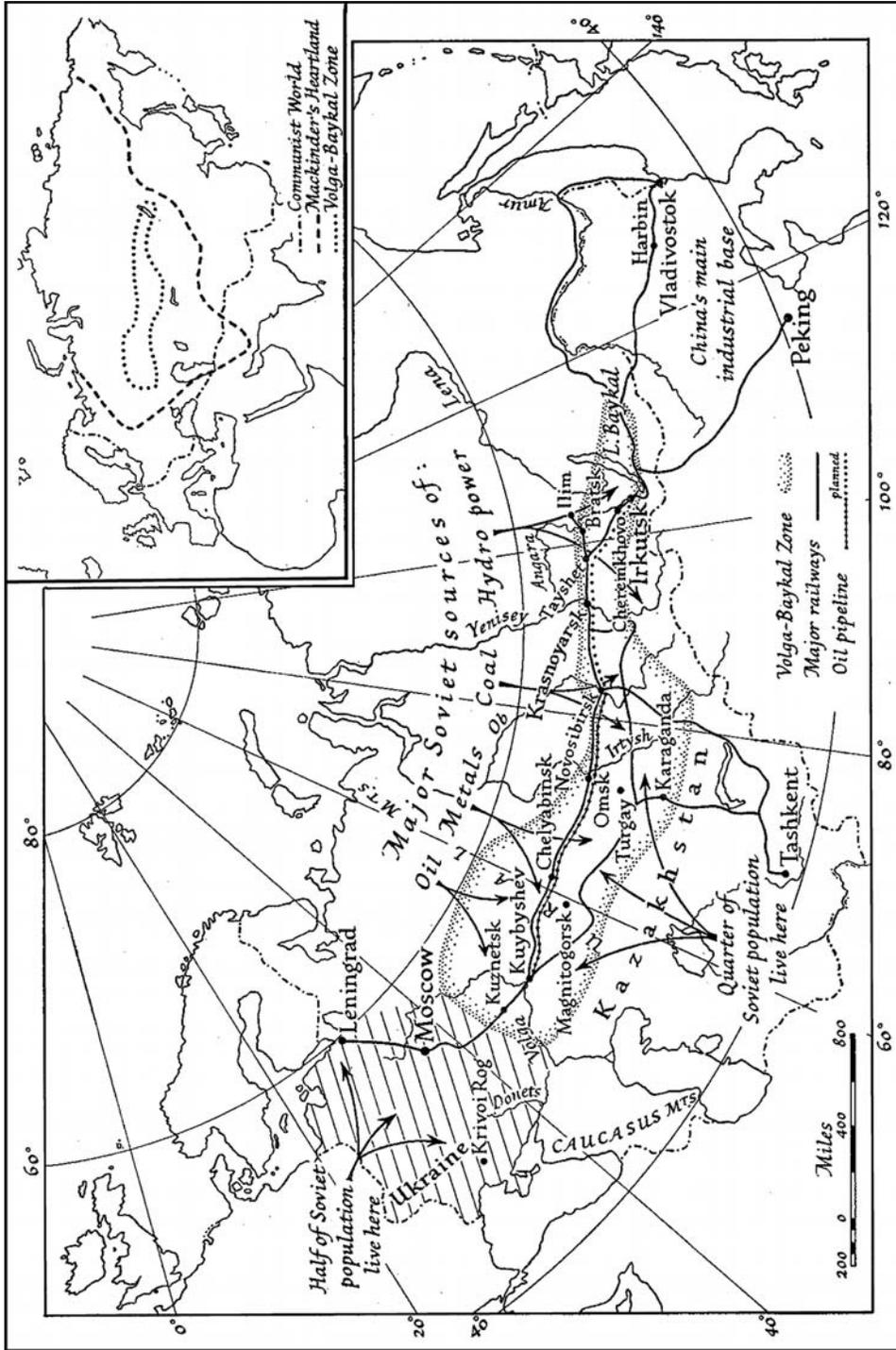


FIG. 1—David Hooson's map of the "New Soviet Heartland" depicts his two chief criteria for delineating it as "effective national territory": rapidly growing cities and a diverse natural-resource base. The inset shows the location of the region within Halford Mackinder's original heartland. Source: Hooson 1962, 22. (Reproduced by permission of John Wiley & Sons Ltd.)

cept in a subtle but important way. Whereas James was referring to “that part of total territory which actually contributes to the support of the citizens of the country,” Hooson’s Effective National Territory was “that major part of the country which consistently produces a surplus in relation to its population and . . . is therefore supporting the rest of the country in a real sense” (Hooson 1966, 342–343). Hooson’s revision enables us to delineate Effective National Territory on a quantitative basis and to consider degrees of “effectiveness.”

In addition, Hooson’s case for the Volga-Baikal zone as the New Soviet Heartland relied on the demographic factor. Although he was not inclined toward elaborate theorization, Hooson consistently advanced one fundamental tenet for human geography: “Why people have come to be just *where* they are is taken here to be the most all-embracing question posed in the geography of a region” (1964, 12). The population in the East was growing twice as rapidly as in the “European” part of the Soviet Union. Even more important was the fact that urbanization in the Volga-Baikal zone was outpacing city growth in the western part of the country (Hooson 1964, 45–50). Hooson drew a strong contrast between “the aging and impoverished rural population, in which European Russia is still top-heavy, and the younger, richer city population” of the Volga-Baikal zone (1964, 123).

#### THE VOLGA–BAIKAL ZONE TODAY

In 2005 *Eurasian Geography and Economics* published two articles, one by Michael Bradshaw and Jessica Prendergrast and the other by Andrei Treivish, that revisited Hooson’s “New Heartland” thesis in order to shed light on the current geographical issues faced by the Russian Federation. In the lead article, Bradshaw and Prendergrast reached the conclusion that a Russian heartland no longer exists: “Instead of a major belt or zone identifiable as the effective national territory, the contemporary landscape is more of an *archipelago* of islands of relative prosperity that contribute the bulk of the national economy” (2005, 118; italics in the original). Treivish essentially concurred with that conclusion and argued for the development of “an internationally competitive, knowledge-intensive, post-industrial economy,” to complement resource extraction (2005, 151).

Thus we have little reason to consider the Volga-Baikal zone the Russian heartland, or even a coherent region. Oil- and gas-producing areas currently serve as “effective territory,” insofar as they account for a portion of the country’s GDP well in excess of their shares of the population. But more populous areas such as Sverdlovsk Oblast, Chelyabinsk Oblast, and Novosibirsk Oblast are not “effective” in this regard. Moreover, as the terms “archipelago” and “scattered” indicate, the Volga-Baikal zone suffers from a lack of connectivity. In this regard, Fiona Hill and Clifford Gaddy drew a sharp contrast between the Moscow region’s actual connectivity and the “artificial connections” President Vladimir Putin has tried to establish in building his “power-vertical” government:

Only Moscow works as a place and a mechanism for fostering normal connections. . . . Moscow embodies the notion of “the market” in the true sense. It attracts and has

attracted people to live and work there on a voluntary basis. It is the connected place in Russia as well as connector to the outside world. It is also the new frontier in post-Soviet Russia, the place of jobs and opportunity, and an attractive place to be in terms of relative temperature and amenities. (2003, 116–117)

#### INDICATORS OF DOMINANCE

Hooson argued that the Volga-Baikal zone “may well bid fair to become a heartland in its own right, taking ‘heart’ to mean the most vital and inner part of a functioning system, in this case the Soviet State” (1962, 20–21). At that time the Soviet Union was a relatively closed system with its own rules, whereas today Russia struggles to adapt to changing circumstances, often beyond its control, in a capitalistic global system. Since Russia has abandoned autarky to engage with the global economy, perhaps the most “vital part” is not the most “inner” but instead the main point of confluence between the Russian subsystem and the larger world. When it was capital of the Soviet Union Moscow was considered one of the great “world cities,” one of the places “in which a quite disproportionate part of the world’s most important business is conducted” (Hall 1977, 1). Moscow remains a world city today but also aspires to attain the status of “global city” by attracting “top-level control and management” of the global financial sector (Sassen 1991, 5), as well as other corporate headquarters and high-end producer services (Kolossoff, Vendina, and O’Loughlin 2002; Gritsai 2004; Kolossoff and O’Loughlin 2004).

Perhaps now that the dominant scale of economic activity has become the global, rather than the national, “heartland” should be put to rest. Yet Moscow, together with functionally connected areas of Moscow Oblast, clearly stands out in the federation as the dominating region. The argument that follows considers the Moscow metropolitan area as a case of exceptionally concentrated urban primacy,<sup>2</sup> a condition the Kremlin views as a major problem. The discussion then turns to the regime’s plan to deconcentrate Moscow by creating a polycentric megaregion.

Hooson presents six criteria for evaluating regions (1964, 15). I will go through them in order and consider the case for the Moscow region in the light of each one. The first of Hooson’s factors to consider is the “scale of contribution to the national economy as a whole.” In this regard, Moscow is in a league of its own. In 2006 Moscow’s share of the national GDP was just over 23 percent, and Moscow Oblast accounted for another 4.2 percent. The oblast ranked fourth among federal subjects,<sup>3</sup> after the capital and two oil- and gas-producing regions in Siberia but ahead of Saint Petersburg, which accounted for 3.6 percent of the national GDP (*Russian Analytical Digest* 2009, 14–15). The 2010 census revealed that Moscow city and oblast together have 18.6 million residents (*Rossiiskaya Gazeta* 2011). Those residents constitute 13 percent of the federation’s population and produce 27.2 percent of the country’s GDP, indicating that the greater metropolitan region is “supporting the rest of the country in a real sense” (Hooson 1966, 342–343). It is true that the Tyumen and Khanty-Mansiisk regions are even more productive in

this regard, but this surplus is precariously based on oil and gas extraction. A better comparison would be with the greater metropolitan region of Saint Petersburg (the city plus Leningrad Oblast), which, with 4.6 percent of the population, accounts for 5.8 percent of the country's GDP.

Moscow is by far the most attractive location in Russia for foreign investment. Slightly over half of the foreign investment in the federation in 2009 went to the capital, and Moscow Oblast ranked fourth with 5.5 percent, not far behind the 6.7 percent accounted for by Saint Petersburg (Rosstat 2010b). Forty-four percent of all enterprises involving foreign capital are in Moscow City and Oblast (Heaney 2009, 34–39). True, the leading “foreign” investor was Cyprus, which means that a great deal of this capital originated in Russia and then took a Mediterranean vacation before coming “home” to Moscow, but that also, for better or worse, is an important dimension of globalization.

Moscow has eclipsed Saint Petersburg as Russia's “Window on the West”—and on the rest of the world as well. Scholars of world cities have long employed air-traffic data to assess cities' interurban and international connectivity (see, for example, Keeling 1995). The Moscow region is home to three of Russia's four busiest airports. In 2011 Domodedovo and Sheremetevo served 25.7 million and 22.4 million passengers, respectively. Saint Petersburg's Pulkovo Airport served 9.6 million, ahead of Moscow's Vnukovo, with 8.2 million. The fifth-busiest airport, Ekaterinburg's, served 5 million fewer passengers than did Vnukovo (Anna.Aero 2012).

In 2009 Moscow accounted for 42.3 percent of Russia's imports and 37.7 percent of its exports (Rosstat 2010e). But it is not just the sheer volume of trade that makes Moscow the country's most important “window.” Although the federation enjoys a strong overall trade surplus, thanks mainly to oil and gas exports, it runs a deficit in the trade of technology and technological services. In 2009 Russia's expenditures for imported technology exceeded by 140 percent the revenue from technology exports. In contrast, Moscow's technology-export revenues, which amounted to 32.4 percent of the national total, exceeded by 25.7 percent its expenditures on technology imports. Saint Petersburg also registered a trade surplus in this regard, a relatively modest 2.1 percent (Rosstat 2010a).

This “globalized” activity induces multiplier effects. Moscow, with 8.1 percent of the country's population, has more than 20 percent of its small businesses (Heaney 2009, 51–54). Many of these firms are retailers: Moscow accounts for 17.3 percent of the country's retail trade, and the oblast handles 6.1 percent, well ahead of Saint Petersburg's 4.2 percent (Rosstat 2010d).

Hooson's second criterion was “rate of population (especially city) growth” (1964, 15). Moscow's population stands at 11.5 million and the oblast another 7.1 million, according to a report based on the 2010 census by the State Statistics Service (Rosstat 2011). In the 2000–2007 period, the population in most federal subjects declined. In contrast, by official estimates Moscow grew at a rate of 0.7 percent annually. The only areas of faster growth were in the North Caucasus, in

other non-Russian rural “republics,” and in two sparsely populated, oil- and gas-producing regions in Siberia. Moscow Oblast also had a positive change rate, if just barely at 0.04 percent (Heaney 2009, 34–39). However, it is highly likely that the official figures are substantially lower than reality because they do not include data on illegal immigrants.

The presence of a large number of non-Slavic immigrants may be partly responsible for the fact that, in 2011, Moscow attained a positive rate of natural increase (Newsru.com 2011; Rosstat 2011). But many of the illegal immigrants reside in the oblast, where reportedly it is much easier for them to establish themselves (Zaionchkovskaya and Mkrtchian 2009; IoVe and Zayonchkovskaya 2011, 554). Because the oblast has an annual natural increase rate of –0.4 percent, some other factor must be involved; perhaps the city’s prosperity and relatively good supply of housing for young couples encourage higher fertility. Indirect support for this hypothesis is provided by the surprising fact that Moscow has the lowest divorce rate of all regions in which ethnic Russians predominate, much lower, in particular, than the boomtowns of western Siberia. The divorce rate per thousand marriages is 713 in Moscow, compared with 761 in the federation and 811 in the Central Federal District (Rosstat 2011).

The next criterion was “relative importance of *accessible* resources” (Hooson 1964, 15; italics in the original). Here Moscow clearly falls short if only natural resources are considered. But if the Russian Federation needs to develop “an internationally competitive, knowledge-intensive, post-industrial economy,” as Treivish advocated (2005, 151), the human resources of Moscow are of incalculable value. Just as a rough indicator, we can use the official data for expenditures on information and communication technology:<sup>4</sup> Moscow City accounts for 30.6 percent of the national total, and Moscow Oblast ranks second with 6.4 percent (Rosstat 2010f).

The capital’s allotment of higher-education facilities and people with advanced degrees is similarly disproportionate to its share of the federation’s population. The Moscow city government’s Web site claims that in 2010 the capital was home to 268 higher-education establishments (MCG 2012). And the surrounding oblast is home to a wide variety of research facilities, many of which were part of the Soviet military-industrial complex. Most are currently underutilized, but significant potential exists there. Of all the people in the federation who hold doctorates or candidates’ degrees, 35.9 percent of them live in Moscow City and 10.1 percent in Moscow Oblast (Rosstat 2010c).

A related criterion is “economic specialization, which will necessarily, in many cases, involve a combination of agricultural and industrial specialisms” (Hooson 1964, 15). Although the government is working to relocate many facilities from the city center, Moscow still has a substantial industrial base, one that accounts for 27 percent of employment in the city (Heaney 2009, 51–54). Moscow Oblast also contains a diverse industrial base, one that has been growing lately with the addition of consumer-products industries desiring access to Moscow and other cities in

the Central Federal District. Moreover, Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev's pet project, building a "Russian Silicon Valley" in nearby Skolkovo, should boost Moscow's production in the high-tech sector. Finally, natural conditions are not the best, but agriculture in the oblast is among the most productive and profitable in the country, thanks to its proximity to the metropolis (Ioffe, Nefedova, and Zaslavsky 2004).

In the postindustrial, global economy the capital's diversity of economic activities is very important. This is particularly true of Moscow's advantages in the service sector. Moscow leads in the availability of the key producer services that all globalizing cities desire, many of which did not exist in the Soviet Union. Financial services are especially well developed, although their operations are far from transparent. Moscow's city government well understands the role of the financial sector in today's global economy, as evidenced by its ambitious Moskva Siti (Moscow City) project, which former Mayor Yury Luzhkov intended eventually to rival London's "City" financial center. In addition, Prime Minister Medvedev announced 2011 that a yet another financial center would be built, probably in "New Moscow" (Argenbright 2011).

Hooson's penultimate criterion, "a certain community of historical associations," obviously need not be belabored in the case of Moscow. Moscow founded the country. Even when Saint Petersburg was the capital, Moscow was considered the center of authentic Russian culture. That label is no longer applicable to the cosmopolitan metropolis, but Moscow is important for every citizen of the federation. Moscow is not just Russia's New York and Washington rolled into one but also its Hollywood.

Finally, Hooson advanced the criterion of "ethnic considerations where they actually loom large in the distinctiveness of a region" (1964, 15). Moscow certainly is distinctive in this regard, but no longer as the core of ethnic, *russkii* culture. What stands out is the region's growing ethnic diversity (Vendina 2008). Moscow is the main place where Russians meet the rest of the world and adapt socially and culturally to globalization. Or perhaps they will not soon adapt: One-fourth to one-third of the Moscow region's inhabitants harbor negative attitudes toward foreign immigrants (Tyuryukanova 2009, 170).<sup>5</sup> But Moscow today has the opportunity to lead Russia toward a future that can look much different from its past. For a country with a diminishing, rapidly aging population, sealing the borders is not a viable strategy. With a per capita gross regional product 2.6 times greater than the Russian average and a low unemployment rate (0.8 percent in 2005), the capital is a migrant magnet (Heaney 2009, 34–39).

#### PROBLEMS OF OVERCONCENTRATION

The data deployed in the foregoing discussion all indicate a great degree of geographical disproportion in key demographic, economic, and social factors. And of course political disproportion is present as well, given that Russia's bureaucratic hierarchy is concentrated in the capital. Between 1999 and 2009 the number of federal *chinovniki* (bureaucrats) grew by 60 percent (Levchenko 2009).

Moscow exhibits many of the diseconomies of scale that frequently arise in cases of extreme urban concentration. The city's territory has expanded only slightly in the post-Soviet period, but the population has grown by 28 percent. Moscow's population density of 11,000 per square kilometer greatly exceeds that of New York or London, each of which has fewer than 7,000 residents per square kilometer.

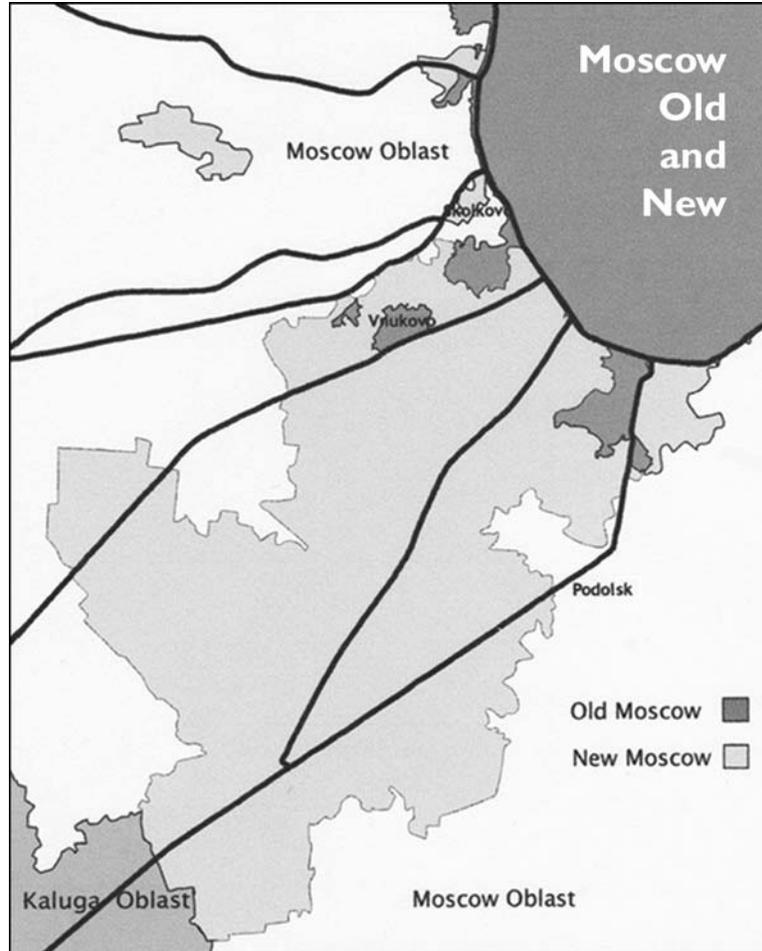


FIG. 2—"New Moscow" is envisioned as extending from Old Moscow southwestward through Moscow Oblast to Kaluga Oblast. *Source:* Modified from Argenbright 2011, 858. (Diagram by the author).

However, the growing number of human bodies is not nearly as problematic as the ever-increasing number of automobiles. Moscow today holds more than 4 million automobiles, six times as many as it had in 1991 when the Soviet Union disintegrated (Argenbright 2008). Also, at least 1 million cars come in from Moscow Oblast on weekdays. Despite an aggressive road-building program, Moscow's traffic

congestion ranks among the worst of the world's large cities (IBM 2011). Moreover, automobile traffic is the main source of Moscow's air pollution. Finally, the high cost of modern office and residential space rounds out the list of major urban diseconomies (*Gazeta.ru* 2012b). For foreign businessmen Moscow is one of the most expensive places on earth.

Among the problems of overconcentration, the regime rates traffic congestion as the worst. Both Prime Minister Medvedev and current Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin have made clear that City Hall's top priority is to deal with congestion. In part to accomplish that goal, Medvedev announced on 17 June 2011 that the Moscow city limits would be expanded into the oblast and that the two entities would be combined in a new Federal District (Argenbright 2011) (Figure 2).

The plan is astonishingly radical. The city's territory will expand to 2.5 times its current size, taking in three relatively small areas to the west and a territory to the southwest that is larger than the current city. Slated to move into "New Moscow" are both the federal and the city governments; that is, some 75,000 *chinovniki* (RIA-Novosti 2011). The government intends to convert the vacated government buildings into hotels instead of private offices on the theory that tourists contribute little to traffic congestion.

Although specific locations remain unknown, the regime intends to relocate government bodies to different locations to serve as cores of new urban nuclei. In the official discourse, Moscow's fatal flaw is its "monocentricity" (EMR 2011; Berishvili 2012). Indeed, the Moscow region functionally has become increasingly focused on the center, as people and jobs have shifted from the more distant parts of the oblast to the *MKAD* beltway around Moscow city (Makhrova 2005). The solution, repeated so often that it must be seen as a panacea, is "polycentricity" (EMR 2011; Berishvili 2012). By splitting the federal and city governments into an as yet unspecified number of "chinovnik towns," the regime intends to nurture the growth of new centers (Sinyaeva, Gavycheva, and Sedakov 2011). As Mayor Sobyenin has indicated, the government believes that nothing stimulates agglomeration better than government complexes (EMR 2011).

In other words, the goal appears to be to transform the highly concentrated primate city into a "megaregion." Definitions of "megaregion" abound; the following is perhaps the most succinct: "Mega-regions are integrated sets of cities and their surrounding suburban hinterlands across which labour and capital can be reallocated at very low cost" (Florida, Fulden, and Mellander 2008, 459). The megaregion is understood as the type of "space of flows" that is flexibly structured and scaled most appropriately to prevail in the expanding global economy (Castells 1996). The imperative to compete at the global scale is the main factor that distinguishes the megaregion from previously identified urban forms, such as "conurbation" and "megalopolis." Peter Hall, among other theorists of the city, sees the megaregion as "a new form[,] . . . the emerging urban form at the start of the 21st century" (2009, 806).

Ultramonocentric Moscow stands in sharp contrast to the polycentric megaregion. As Hall notes, in Europe polycentricity “has become a normative concept, a principle to be achieved through policy intervention” (2009, 814). No less than Peter I did 300 years ago, Russia’s leaders aspire both to emulate and, if possible, outdo Europe. However, in this case they seem to have embraced the form, or perhaps just the rhetoric, of polycentricity without grasping its substance. In Europe new forms of governance are being worked out as the megaregion evolves. Louis Albrechts cites a growing need for “the abandonment of bureaucratic approaches and the involvement of skills and resources that are external to the traditional administrative apparatus” (2011, 75). Saskia Sassen makes a case for “innovative governance umbrellas, along with new types of private-public arrangement” (2011, 103). Yet in Russia the megaregion project has begun with an intensification of central control.

The dismissal of Moscow’s Mayor Luzhkov, who had preserved considerable autonomy, was the first step in the tightening of the Kremlin’s grip. Moreover, as I noted above, the capital and the oblast are supposed to be combined in a new federal district, which will be headed by a Putin appointee. Oblast Governor Boris Gromov resigned his post in April 2012. He was replaced by Sergei Shoigu, the federal minister of emergency situations, who acknowledged frankly that he would be representing President Putin’s “power vertical” (*Gazeta.ru* 2012a). In addition, it appears now that the residents of five towns that will be annexed to Moscow will lose the right to elect their mayors (Vinokurova 2012).

The Putin regime obviously seeks to maximize central control. Nevertheless, it hardly seems necessary for the city to annex such a capacious, largely unpopulated territory (Kolosov 2011), especially when other thickly populated areas that are functionally connected, and often adjacent, to Moscow are excluded. As much as possible the boundaries of New Moscow exclude existing urban settlements, reportedly to avoid the need to confer on their residents the special benefits that documented Muscovites receive. Probably, down-at-the-heel towns such as Podolsk, population 190,000, will serve as bedroom communities for New Moscow’s blue-collar workers, including the undocumented migrants who will need inexpensive housing.

Other nodes are likely to emerge outside the city’s jurisdiction. For example, the areas around international airports and the corridors leading to them frequently are vital components of megaregions (Hall 2009, 807), yet only one of Moscow’s three international airports is located inside New Moscow: Vnukovo, which is owned and operated by the city government.

In the past, antagonism between Mayor Luzhkov and Governor Gromov hobbled all attempts at regional planning: Moscow’s radial highways frequently turn into country roads beyond the МКАД beltway. Some sort of planning agency that will stretch across city limits would appear necessary, although innovative public-private partnerships seem unlikely, except for behind-the-scenes kickbacks (Petrov 2011). The regime’s “multipolar” rhetoric may echo Europe, but actual



FIG. 3—Skolkovo, Russia’s “Silicon Valley,” is just beginning to take shape. The School of Management, shown here, is the first major structure. (Photograph by the author, July 2012)

governance in Russia more closely resembles China. With respect to the latter, J. Xu and A. G. O. Yeh conclude that “there is a lack of structure to forge horizontal networking because China does not have a tradition of valuing this type of urban partnership, and the dominant linkages are hierarchically organized” (2011, 232). With respect to New Moscow, Vladimir Kolosov considers that “the old Russian tradition of undivided authority and the urge to have centralized authority decide every issue are very much alive and well” (2011; my translation).

At the moment, New Moscow remains more of a dream than reality. In the context of this article, what is most important is that Moscow Oblast is no longer able to block the growth of the city of Moscow. That change alone will enable improvement of traffic flows as well as a great deal more suburbanization (Kirillov and Makhrova 2009, 53). At the least, there should be some reduction in the diseconomies of overconcentration and some increase in the factors that attract ambitious, well-educated young people to the region. Skolkovo is growing already (Figure 3), and other research and educational facilities are likely to be opened in New Moscow. Other migrants will come seeking jobs in construction: Hundreds of billions of dollars will have to be invested in infrastructure development (Kvasha and Petrova 2011). Multiplier effects will generate many more opportunities for newcomers. Even if the currently sketchy plans are not wholly

realized, Moscow's dominance over the rest of the country will reach an unprecedented level.

Many observers are concerned that the state's focus on developing Moscow as a megaregion will have negative consequences for the rest of the country (Bocharova 2011; Osipova 2011; Volobueva and Ushakova 2011). As noted above, Moscow's population has grown by 28 percent since 1989. No place in Russia attracts people like Moscow. T. I. Yaskova's study of migration from Smolensk Oblast to Moscow found that the two most important factors were gaining access to "the diverse cultural treasures of the capital" and finding "suitable employment" (2010, 96; my translation). As Yaskova concludes, the problem is not just the "quantitative" reduction in population in the Smolensk area but also the "qualitative" loss of young, educated, ambitious people. This broad trend is bound to intensify as the New Moscow megaproject gets under way, much to the detriment of many, if not most, other regions in the country.

#### MOSCOW RULES

Moscow's expansion and transformation into a polycentric megaregion may well divert growth away from the rest of the country. It might be argued, however, that few alternatives exist if Russia is to play a major role in the global economy as more than an exporter of natural resources. Only Moscow is in a position to aspire to "global city" status, although Saint Petersburg will remain a capital of world culture and an important economic center. The rest of Russia's widely dispersed cities will have to find a different strategy (Vendina 2007).

If the most important question for human geography, as David Hooson believed, is why people are located where they are, it matters that the greater Moscow metropolitan area is the place where energetic, forward-looking people want to live. In Jefferson's words, "thither flows an unending stream of the young and ambitious in search of fame and fortune" (1939, 226). Today, when "everything solid melts into air" with alarming frequency, the places that attract smart, ambitious, and adaptable people are the most likely to prevail. Moscow's rise may or may not be good for the country as a whole, but it appears very likely to continue.

#### NOTES

1. The unrivaled English-language history of Soviet Moscow is Timothy Colton's *Moscow: Governing the Socialist Metropolis* (1995).

2. The Moscow metropolitan area is not officially designated, so data are not collected on that basis. But, as Ioffe and Zaionchkovskaya note (2011, 544), if the limits of the Moscow "agglomeration" are defined functionally by a distance from the city of a two-hour ride on public transportation, only 5 percent of the population of the oblast are excluded.

3. The Russian Federation consists of eighty-three "subjects": autonomous republics, oblasts, krais, autonomous okrugs, one autonomous oblast, and the two federal cities, Moscow and Saint Petersburg. On top of this pattern, the subjects are grouped into seven federal districts. If created, the new federal district that would comprise Moscow city and oblast would be the eighth.

4. The data do not include purchases by small private firms or individual consumers.

5. I found this statistic and its source in Ioffe and Zaionchkovskaya 2011, 556.

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