

Uneven Urban Resilience: The Economic Adjustment and Polarization of Russia's Cities

Dr Oleg Golubchikov
Senior Lecturer in Human Geography
School of Geography and Planning, Cardiff University
golubchikovo@cardiff.ac.uk
+44 (0)29 2087 9310

The multi-dimensional processes of transition to a market economy have produced a radical rupture to the previous development of Russian cities. Many factors driving urban change under the Soviet system, both ideological and material in nature, have lost their legitimacy or significance under the capitalist regime of accumulation and regulation. Thus, no longer perceived as a purpose-built machine for a meaningful evolution to a fair and egalitarian communist society as before, each city has been exposed to the ideology of the free market and pushed to acquire a new niche in the nexus of global and local capitalist flows. Not all cities have been equally successful in this endeavour. Indeed, under the conditions of general economic disorganization and harsh economic downturn introduced by the poorly performed neoliberal reforms of the early 1990s, different urban regions already began to demonstrate divergent trajectories of economic performance, including severe marginalization and peripheralization by some and more successful adaptation by others. These processes of initial spatial differentiation have become self-perpetuating even under the conditions of 'restorative' growth experienced in Russia between 1998 and 2008, as well as the ensuing period of more bumpy economic growth.