

# Territorial Mobility of Young People: Attractive Cities and Countries

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**Abstract.** The article focuses on territorial mobility of young people, which refers to their willingness to move outside their current place of residence. Being an economic and intellectual resource, youth is a driver of the settlement development that enhances its status and competitiveness. Territorial mobility of youth is becoming a factor of the accumulation of human capital or its decline. In 2019, a sociological study was conducted, its object was the students and employed youth of Yekaterinburg. 750 young men and women were interviewed using the survey method, 22 in-depth interviews and an expert survey (n = 10) were conducted. The research showed that young people of big Russian cities plan to move to other Russian or foreign cities. The leaders are Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kazan and Prague. According to the opinion of young people, these cities have favorable conditions for satisfying a wide range of needs and interests, opportunities for getting high-quality education, vertical mobility and self-fulfillment. The younger generation is also striving for new experiences and impressions that territorial mobility can provide.

## 1 Introduction

Territorial mobility of youth is one of the key processes in modern Russian society. According to Burgess (1925) mobility encompasses change, new experience, stimulation and is considered to be a marker of social transformations. Younger generation movements act as a condition for the enrichment / impoverishment of the human capital of the territory. Youth is an intellectual and economic resource, a driving force of the settlement development that strengthens its status and competitiveness. This social group has innovative ideas; it constitutes a creative class (Florida 2002) that is marked by creative way of thinking and non-trivial approach to solving problems. Young people, unlike other age groups, are more focused on the future, on changes and search for something new (Strunkina 2015).

Any movement is associated with certain risks. According to Luhmann (1991) a risk shapes human behavioral space. Relocation requires solving urgent economic, domestic, leisure and other issues of daily routine. However, such risks act as a way to actualize the innovative leadership potential of the young generation, personal characteristics and qualities of individuals (Zubok 2003). Carrying out territorial mobility, the young generation boosts their reserves through practices of adaptation to new conditions.

Accepting and understanding the role of youth in the development of the territory, progressive regions rely on the younger generation, create conditions to satisfy their interests. At the same time they strive to create and consolidate territorial identity, define current needs and requirements, propose mechanisms and tools for self-fulfillment. Territories with a positive image have significant advantages: it is easier for young people to integrate into the urban environment, to socialize and construct their identity in relation to the city.

In this regard, it is important to find out views of the younger generation on the most attractive / leading territories and characterize the factors of the city's appeal.

## **2 Theoretical background**

Modern scientific approach is marked by re-assessment of the classical foundations of mobility research laid down in the works of Sorokin (1927). This scientific "mobility shift" is associated with the works of Sheller and Urry (2006). According to their concept, mobility is horizontal movements that connect individual and group movements into a single social network which forms a network capital rather than vertical movements from one social position to another. In this case, the focus is on strengthening social ties – not destructing them.

While referring to the concept of territorial mobility, two main directions of research practices should be distinguished. The first one is related to the study of everyday mobility. In this case, we are talking about the movements of individuals and groups within the boundaries of one territorial unit (trips to work, meetings with friends, visits to concerts, cafes, museums, shops, etc.). Everyday life, as viewed by Berger and Luckmann (1995), is an intersubjective world in which an individual cannot exist without constant interaction and communication with other people.

The second direction of research is aimed at analyzing territorial mobility as a migration movement. Migration should determine a fact of movement and mobility is the willingness to move (Rybakovsky 2001). According to this approach it can be argued that territorial mobility will exceed migration, since there are sociocultural, institutional, economic, organizational and other barriers that impede the real movement of the population.

Territorial (horizontal) movements can change a status position of an individual or a group. For example, a school leaver plans to move to enter a university outside his current residence. At the same time, the university prestige can be assessed with the help of rating systems. In addition, a territory prestige also plays a significant role in shaping territorial mobility. We observe territorial mobility from the periphery to the center (Omelchenko et al. 2015). Moving to capitals and living in them can implicitly become a condition for strengthening social potential and expanding social interaction, enriching young men and women with new useful (for example, for status enhancement) social connections. Thus, the issues of prestige, territory status and its leadership potential for attracting young generation are becoming more and more topical in the modern global space.

## **3 Materials and methods**

Our study was conducted in April-July 2019. A theoretical foundation of the study was a poly-methodological strategy, which took into account the opinions, judgements and assessments of different agents that were included directly / indirectly in the potential territorial mobility. The main goal of the study was to analyze the territorial mobility of young people and to study the cities and countries that are the most attractive for living and satisfying one's needs as estimated by the younger generation.

To implement the project a questionnaire was developed for young people aged 18 – 30 that consisted of 48 (open, closed, semi-closed) questions. We also developed a guide to in-depth interviews with young people consisting of 3 blocks of questions aimed at solving the following problems. Firstly, to determine the image of the ideal territory as a place of residence and identify conditions for self-actualization. Secondly, to identify migration prerequisite and motivation for moving to another territory. Thirdly, to study the reasons for youth's reluctance to change their current place of residence. In addition, we developed an expert interview guide consisting of 7 questions. In the course of the interview, we sought to define a current image of youth, their motivation for moving and the conditions to be created by local administrators to keep the young generation in the city.

During the study, we interviewed 750 young people – residents of Yekaterinburg under 30 years of age (47% of them were students, 53% – employees). In total, 40% of boys and 60% of girls: interviewees aged 18-20 were 37.9%, age range of 21-25 y.o. – 42.3%, age range of 26-30 y.o. – 19.8%. Students receive higher education at Ural Federal University, Ural Institute of Management of Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration, University of Humanities, Russian State Vocational and Pedagogical University, Ural State University of Railway Engineering, Ural State University of Economics, and Ural State Agrarian University, Ural State Pedagogical University. 68.1% of the respondents are students of the humanitarian and social field of education, 31.9% of respondents are receiving education in the spheres of technics, mathematics and natural sciences. 88% of respondents are Bachelor students with an equal ratio of federal budget and non-budget students. The main areas of employment of the respondents are law, finance, banking (18.4%), education and science (18.4%), media and advertising (16.5%). Most of the

employees are specialists (54.8%). Every third of them has a higher education, 70% of respondents are not married. The SPSS program was used to process the results of the survey.

We conducted 22 in-depth interviews with young people: 9 informants were students; 13 informants were employees. The survey involved 7 boys and 15 girls. 12 informants do not seek to change their place of residence, 10 informants plan to move. The interview was conducted at the place of work / study of informants in their free time. The average interview duration was 30 minutes. We also conducted 10 expert interviews. The experts were managers / top specialists of youth projects conducted at the regional municipal and university levels; representatives of the scientific community that specialize in marketing and territory branding. The interviews were conducted in the workplace of experts in their free time. The average interview duration was 45 minutes. The results of the interviews were deciphered (transcribed). The interview texts were summarized and grouped in accordance with the research goals.

#### 4 Results and discussions

Motivation for potential territorial mobility two-thirds of the young survey participants have. This fundamentally changes perception of the city the respondents are currently living in. Despite the fact that Yekaterinburg holds leading positions in Russia (3<sup>rd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> places) on most socio-economic indicators, 62% do not consider it as a city for living. Modeling one's life as a kind of "path", "movement" leads to the perception of Yekaterinburg as a stop on this path and forms a background expectation of further movement. At the same time the natives of Yekaterinburg as well as young migrants equally ready for further migration.

The most desirable direction of mobility is moving to another country (36%); migration within Russia seems also attractive for young people (27%). Only 19% of respondents commit unequivocally to a tendency to settle and lack of desire to move to another city. Such an indicator is becoming one of the basic and fundamentally new characteristic features of the young generation: an absence of territorial mobility in the Soviet era is becoming a thing of the past.

In the ranking of "ideal" cities for life among Russian cities the leading positions are held by St. Petersburg (21% choose it as a desired city), Moscow (14%) and Kazan (7%). However, the reasons for choosing these cities are specific.

Moscow (the capital of the Russian Federation) is a city for career and success: "Opportunities for well-paid self-actualization, a level and quality of life is above the national average. Vast opportunities for adults and children. I like the high pace of life in Moscow". A structure of motives for choosing Moscow is dominated by the factor of interesting job (71%); much attention is paid to Moscow's leadership in economic (47%) and political (23%) spheres. Moscow is considered as a leader in innovations, it is a city of the future when compared with the rest of Russia: "The newest things appear in Moscow first: cool art spaces, modern parks and playgrounds, electric vehicles, state-of-the-art medicine" (man, 20 y.o.). This leadership is also manifested in a complexity of the tasks that Moscow seeks in a professional sphere: "There is a lack of such wide-range objectives that can be sought in Moscow as most clients are local, their tasks are simpler, there are almost no large-scale projects, it is not so interesting" (woman, 22 y.o.). Experts also support this idea: "In their search of a new competitive environment, new opportunities and challenges they leave for Moscow and enter the educational establishments there" (man, leader of the public movement). Moscow is a leader in infrastructure development that allows its visitors to describe Moscow as a "city for people", where traffic interchanges, shops and leisure sphere, etc., "promptly respond to residents' needs and requests".

**Table 1.** Leadership Factors in Russian Cities

	Moscow	Saint Petersburg	Kazan
You can find an interesting job here	70,7%	45,7%	26,7%
One of the economic leaders of the country	46,7%	25,3%	30,0%
Beautiful city with stunning architecture	40,0%	73,4%	80,0%
A dream city	22,7%	28,7%	13,3%
There are opportunities for youth	36,0%	28,7%	30,0%
There is a demand for specialists in my profession	33,3%	23,4%	20,0%
There are many sights and attractions, rich history of the city	28,0%	50,0%	43,3%
Climate and geographical location of the city	28,0%	20,2%	43,3%
A peculiar atmosphere of the city, peculiar mentality of its residents, traditions of the city	24,0%	53,2%	40,0%
A leader in the political sphere of the country	22,7%	6,4%	0,0%
Resonates with my temperament and habits	13,3%	28,7%	6,7%

Source: Own results

Saint Petersburg is a city for soul and self-realization. This city is chosen emotionally (it resonates with people's temperament and habits – 29%) and for its beauty – the city architecture (73%) and its atmosphere (53%). “Enormous potential for self-fulfillment, art, unusual options for leisure activities, stunning cityscape. In general, very open, trendy, polite people”. This city is the closest to Europe – in terms of geography and culture. It offers vast opportunities for tourism, educational and business trips, for integration with European culture and at the same time it is unique and deeply rooted in history (50%).

Kazan is a city for prospects. It is chosen primarily by those who have visited it. After significant transformations connected with world-class sports and political events, Kazan is perceived as one of the most beautiful (80%) and modern cities. Those who choose Kazan regard this city as the economic leader of Russia (30%) more often than those who choose St. Petersburg (25%). At the same time there are no typical disadvantages of the largest megacities: “Promising, but not as dynamic as Moscow”, “Clean (if compared to Yekaterinburg), innovative, with lots of affordable housing being built for the young people”.

The choice of an ideal city outside Russia is very wide, therefore, young project participants named the cities of the former Soviet Union (Kiev, Minsk, Tbilisi) as well as foreign ones (European, Asian and American regions). Prague holds a relatively leading position in this list (6% of the choices). This city has gained its appeal for Russian students due to its openness for academic mobility, which is considered to be one of the most important indicators of the quality and accessibility of higher education as well as a springboard for future career success (Vishnevsky and Narkhov 2019). Prague has cultural and linguistic affinity, at the same time it is perceived by Russian youth as a “classic European city” with its “clean streets”, “good education and well-paid jobs”, “warmness and safety”, “history and modernity”, “beauty, coziness; friendly and kind residents”, “developed infrastructure and many opportunities”. Prague is often regarded as an alternative to St. Petersburg in Russia. In the perception of young people, these are two cities where talented youth flock and are offered a maximum amount of opportunities. This is the most comfortable first step beyond the borders of Russia: the only foreign city that is described as “my place, I feel calm there and my soul is at home”. In Prague “tolerance of its residents is higher” and the standard of living is comparable to other European countries.

All these factors predetermine the leadership of Prague as an ideal start in territorial mobility as estimated by Russian youth. Experts contrast the attractiveness of Eastern Europe to a high degree of risk while moving to world centers: “There are some young people who are ready to use Work and Travel program for shifting to an illegal position and working there until the end of their lives” (M., head of the master's program). Trying to reduce these risks, young people can accumulate social capital through participation in various professional and educational projects, for example, volunteering.

Other foreign cities that were mentioned during the survey were (in descending order) London, New York, Oslo, Barcelona, Berlin, Los Angeles, etc. What determines the leadership of these cities as centers of attracting young Russians?

On the one hand, travel experience of young people is becoming more complex and multifaceted: starting to travel from an early age, they have numerous, but rather superficial impressions of cities. These are some pictures, supplemented by their emotions from encountering the city, its inhabitants and its events. Someone remembered the ideal city as “serene” (Antwerp), or “relaxed, with smiling people” (Barcelona), someone was inspired by “a sense of freedom” (Hamburg) or “severity and grandeur” (London).

On the other hand, the image of each city is determined by collective conceptions drawn from mass media, communication with other people, and it often has a stereotyped character. Foreign cities seem more economically stable, successful, offering more career prospects and wealth. According to experts, young people use mass media not only for searching objective information about other countries and cities, but also for reinforcing their ideas: “Children today trust the smartphone more than their parents and the information they get there is more understandable and reliable for them, they can find the answers they have already formed, thus they try to reinforce their ideas with mass media opinions” (m., head of the social movement). Such an idealized image of foreign cities triggers a desire to go abroad without a well-shaped and elaborated plan for further life: “My young colleague won the Green Card and is very happy about this fact. This is the case when she applied a lot of efforts to win it, but she doesn't really imagine what to do next: well, she got this Green Card and what next?”. In turn, a high uncertainty of the future and lack of planning can cause adaptation problems: according to research, young people with a clear vision of their future and clear life strategies demonstrate better ability for social adaptation (Didkovskaya and Trynov 2019).

Finally, objective differences between Russian and foreign cities - climate and landscape conditions (more favorable climatic conditions, sea, mountains, etc.), small distance and easy travel (i.e. between European cities), environmental trends and etc. can predetermine the choice of these cities. Note that political factors (democratic principles, freedom of speech, etc.) are mentioned in an extremely small number (less than 0.3%) of cases.

It should also be noted that despite the high readiness for territorial mobility, 42% of young residents of Yekaterinburg would like to make their choice in favor of one city and spend their future lives in it on a

stable and orderly basis (among students this indicator amounts to 38%, for employed youth - 53%). Correspondingly, 58% plan to live in different cities striving for territorial mobility and display a search for more prosperous life (economic, environmental, etc.) as well as a need for new experiences and impressions.

## 5 Conclusions

Overall, the results of the study led to the following conclusions. Firstly, modern youth strives for active territorial mobility: every third person plans to move to another country, every fourth one plans to move to another Russian city. Secondly, the leading positions among the most attractive cities for further life are held by Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kazan, Prague. Thirdly, the motivation for choosing a city varies greatly: Moscow attracts with a wide range of career opportunities, Saint Petersburg - with conditions for self-fulfillment, Kazan - with prospects, Prague - with the quality and accessibility of education. The attractiveness of large cities as the most preferred places of residence with a wide range of opportunities to meet the urgent needs of modern people, is currently becoming one of the crucial factors of increasing territorial mobility of young people (Abramova et al. 2019). Fourth, at the stage of mobility planning modern youth is guided not only by the economic, political and social well-being of the territory, but also strives to satisfy a need for new experiences.

In general, young people of Russia are distinguished by practicality, independence and high mobility level (Gerasimova 2013; Golovchin and Leonidova 2014). They take responsibility for fulfilling their life plans: getting a high-quality education, employment and career advancement. This indicates that young people reserve to themselves a right to change territories. Local authorities should be guided in their activities by a desire to create necessary conditions aimed at satisfying a wide range of needs of all categories of residents, including young people. In this regard, it seems important to study the factors of that form territorial identity and youth immobility culture.

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