

THURSDAY, 21 April

10.50 - 12.10 Parallel Sessions

Public transport as public space (part 1)

[Marshrutka – Zenne 23]

Convenors

PUTSPACE team

Chair: Tonio Weicker (Leibniz-Institute for Regional Geography)

Egor Muleev, Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography

The role of passengers in mobility transitions: the case of trolleybuses in Ulyanovsk between 1990 and 2022.

In comparison with marshrutka-based mobility, municipal electric public transport receives little attention from an academic perspective. The USSR experience in planning and management remains also silent to the mainstream, western-influenced “orthodox” and “sustainable” agenda not only in Russia but worldwide as well. Also issues of mobility transformation refers to a “new” marshrutka phenomenon rather than “old” trams and trolleybuses. There is a gap in literature focusing on consequences of capitalism restoration in the light of electric urban public transport in Russia and also in contemporary challenges in the light of digitalization and contracting procedures. I argue that some features of the USSR approach have been saved thanks to the contribution of passengers. I explore the role of passengers in both senses of civil protests and their representation in the decision making process in issues like closures as well as maintenance and renovation. Outlines are based on the fieldwork in Ulyanovsk, a mid-size Russian city.

Bermet Borubaeva, Independent analyst, The Bishkek School of Contemporary Art

Trolley Encounters in Frunze - a city that we lost

A presentation about a specific type of public transportation in the Soviet Union - a case study of “excursion-trolleybus” in Frunze (now Bishkek) in a period of 80-s XX and its legacy today. I want to present a research-based presentation on archival materials and interviews of citizens and a comparative analysis of the contemporary situations in public transportation to discuss on a theoretical level equality and mobility justice and transport poverty by exploring the unique examples of transport infrastructure in different contexts but the same city.

Excursion-trolleybus in Frunze runs until the late 80-s of the XX century and was open to the public. If we consider it as a “product” it can display the multitude of social approaches toward transport organization and practical implementation of what was a trolleybus for users and users-oriented position. From the stories of citizens who used them and remember the excursion trolleybus, we can have more information strengthened by personal interviews and archive materials of photos, video, and political documentation in the State Archives of Kyrgyz Republic. Stories from citizens full of memories and nostalgia but if we look at this on an analytical level we will see how this system was citizen-oriented by organized of guiding tours not for only tourists, but for local citizens:

“It was 10 kopecks. Half-empty. A woman's voice was speaking into the microphone. On the left, we pass and so on, year of construction, by whom. Monuments to whom, when, by whom. Attractions, the name of the parks”

Besides this around Frunze from terminal to terminal on different routes was a circulating trolleybus with the sign "Buffet". He was made especially for trolleybus drivers to give them a launch break after ending the route. It shows again the human-oriented approach in public transport organization comparing the contemporary system of precarious labor of urban transport drivers that last sometimes more than 14 hours almost and air pollution ranked often the 1st place in the world caused partly by absence of public transportation

Siying Wu, University of Edinburgh

Mobile Lives Underground: Mundane Passengering and Everyday Urban Encounters in Guangzhou Metro, China

Taking as its starting point the metro as a collective space that encapsulates intense and transient encounters between different bodies and materialities, this research explores how everyday encounters with others and lived experiences of passenger (im)mobilities in metro space unfolds. Drawing on ethnographic research based on semi-structured in-depth interviews with 18 metro passengers and four-month participant observation during multiple trips in Guangzhou metro, I will present how experiences, representations, and more-than-representational affects of everyday (im)mobilities in public space are produced, shaped and negotiated through encounters with others. Resonating with recent calls to develop theoretical and paradigmatic dialogues between mobilities studies and transport geography, this study argues that the metro is more than a fundamental transport infrastructure accommodating mass mobilities in the city, but a unique urban public space that is open to negotiation, reproduction and contestation through everyday encounters. Thus, this research asks how the 'throwtogetherness' (Massey, 2005: 5) of urban everyday life is rooted, lived and represented in and through encounters in mundane mobilities in metro travel. Apart from narratives from interviews and ethnographic observations, I will also present photographs taken by research participants and myself during metro journeys to shed light on how banal moments of (im)mobilities are made sense of through the meanings and representations (Cresswell, 2010). This research offers insights into urban experiences in emerging megacity in China and extends existing debates on encounters in public transport as public spaces with empirical evidence beyond Western contexts.

Nils van der Wildt*, University of Groningen

Tauri Tuvikene, Tallinn University

Social interactions on public transport: Observations from the public transportation network in Tallinn, Estonia

Public transport is more than an infrastructure to transport people between places. It is a sight of mundane daily interactions. Yet, there is much more studies on planning public transport and developing it according to transport engineering and economics logics than understanding the social aspects of it. This is an omission this paper seeks to challenge by building on the emerging field of public transport as social space. The paper highlights how interactions are key for making public transport social space. Nevertheless, the presentation indicates the importance of temporal patterns for social interactions: meaning that public transport has more conversations in evenings and weekends rather than morning rush hour. It is suggested here that rather than the busy-ness of vehicles being the main factor on shaping sociality, it is actually the temporal rhythm shaped by the time of the day or weekly pattern that shapes the conversation ratios. This paper describes the findings of a qualitative study with quantitative elements, which is based on a series of observations conducted in the urban public transport network within the city of Tallinn, Estonia, in the period from October until November 2021.