Hyper and Dynamic Growth in the ASEAN Region and the Emerging Strategy for Bintan Eco-Island (Indonesia)
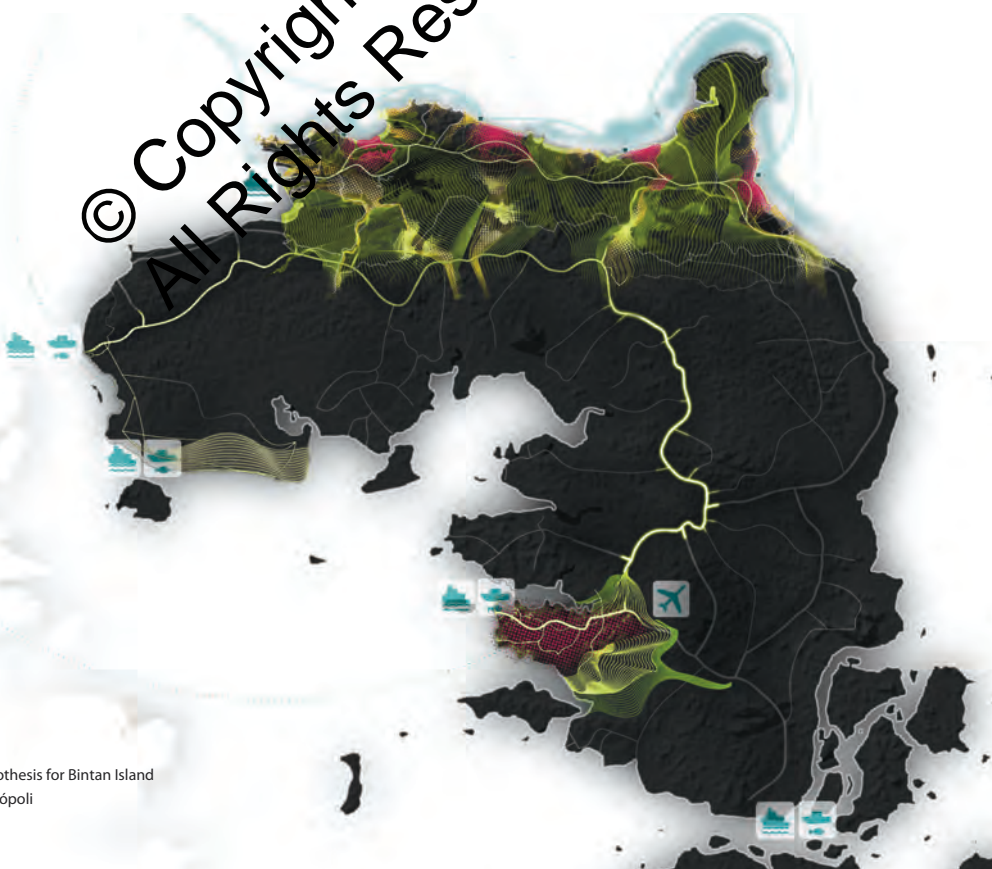
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Mark Dwyer
Maki Kawaguchi

Figure 1: Territorial Hypothesis for Bintan Island
Source: Fundación Metrópoli

Hyper and dynamic are two descriptive terms frequently associated with or applied to urban development across Asia. This paper addresses the ASEAN context, the rapidly developing region of South East Asia covering roughly half the surface area of the United States and with twice its population with nearly 600 million inhabitants. It takes as a case study Bintan Island, one of Indonesia´s more than 17,000 islands which benefits from its strategic location to nearby Singapore and the competitive advantages that can be discovered within its surrounding territory.

A World of Cities
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In the last decade of the 20th century and especially at the beginning of the 21st century, we have experienced profound and accelerated urban transformations which suggest a distinct historical era; one in which economics, politics, society, and the environments in which we live, are affected decisively. The process of urbanization is unprecedented, as we now speak of cities without limits.

In a short period of time, there has been a tremendous spatial transformation in major cities around the world. In developing countries it corresponds to a high population growth and in developed countries it has almost exclusively to do with changes in consumption space. In 1950, approximately 30% of the population could be considered urban. In 2000 the percentage of urban population was close to 50% and, according to estimates, in the year 2025; approximately 70% of the world´s population will be living in urbanized areas. Demographers also predict that by 2025 there will be more than 30 megacities, with more than 8 million people, and more than 500 cities with more than one million inhabitants.

A process of this magnitude is an extraordinary challenge to social, infrastructural, and environmental functions and it is where we find ourselves today. Simultaneously, over the next three decades, cities worldwide will spend an estimated US$350 trillion on the construction, operation, and maintenance of urban infrastructure, including power production and distribution, residential and commercial buildings, water and waste systems, roads and transportation, and supporting information and communications technology. Policymakers should view this projected spending as an opportunity for their cities to become early adopters and investors in transformational solutions - and, by extension, to create healthier and more sustainable lifestyles (Recio, 2010). It is not only a quantitative process; cities are the nodes that articulate and organize the global economy; without the commitment of cities, the principles of sustainable development and continued quality of life on the planet are not viable. Consequently, the design, construction and management of 21st century cities are one of the great tasks for humanity.

As Saskia Sassen (2001) writes, cities continue to become more and more central to local and regional economies, and "they are exposed to a very open form of international competition". The progressive dismantling of barriers to international trade, easier access to information, and improved transportation and communication systems all contribute to the globalization of urban economies. Today, states have a declining importance as a unitary category in the global economy. Companies in the global economy increase the demand for support services for their own productivity, begging financial and legal services, management, innovation, design, production technology, maintenance, logistics, communications, distribution, and advertising. The complexity, diversity, and specialization of business services offered provides an option much cheaper

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CITIES WITH MORE THAN
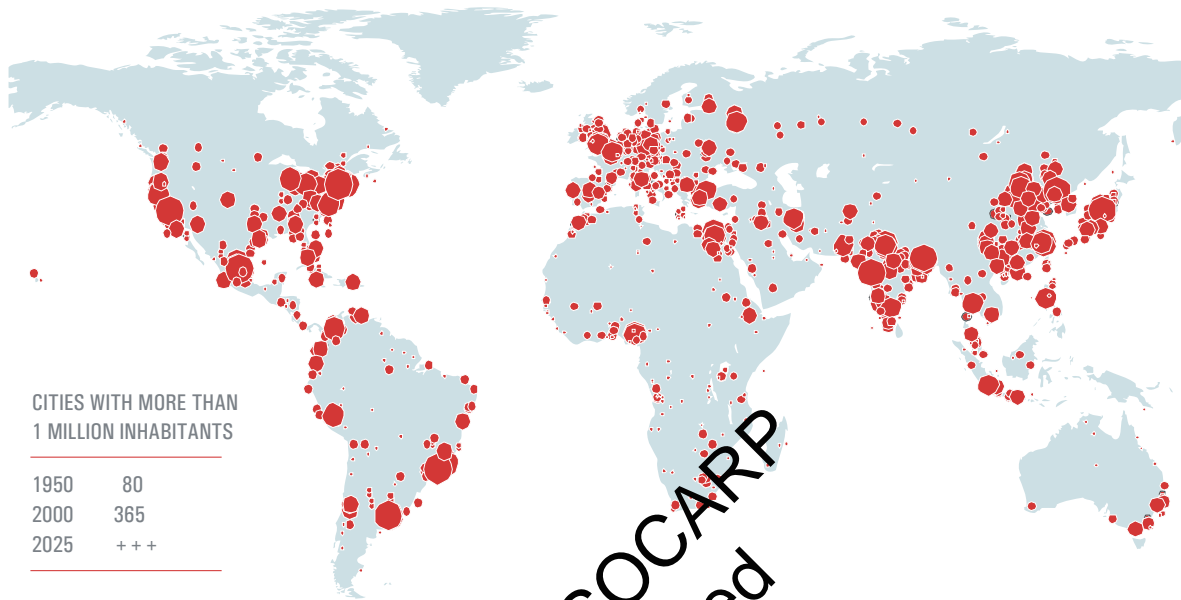1 MILLION INHABITANTS

1950	80
2000	365
2025	+ + +

Figure 2: Cities with more than 1 million inhabitants
Source: Fundación Metrópoli

than hiring professionals who work permanently in different departments of the same company. Therefore, a "complex of services" arises, based in cities of critical mass.

This economic shift impacts the structural dynamics and leadership on the global stage as power and influence shift from states to cities. Many states are too small and weak to control global flows of power, wealth, trade and international technology, and are often too large and heterogeneous to represent the social and cultural plurality of their citizens. On the other hand, states lose legitimacy as representative bodies and efficient organizations, making the cities and regions well positioned to perform these functions. In the current global economy, competition occurs more at the city and regional levels, which are better able to provide competitive advantages for companies and quality of life for citizens.

Cities can create competitive advantages by building efficient urban infrastructure, and offering

services that encourage economic and cultural synergies. Increasingly, cities and businesses need to be aware of the broader context in which they operate. This requires new working methods and new instruments in urban and regional planning. By their very structure, national governments lack the flexibility to innovate or lead society in an increasingly competitive direction. Given this reality, it becomes clear that the successes and failures of our cities will be the successes and failures of our countries. As an indicator of this shift, the World Bank[1] and Inter-American Development Bank [2] are actively redirecting their investment strategies for developing nations to focus attention on cities. Major issues such as economic competitiveness, social stability, quality of life, and environmental sustainability will depend on the collective ability to reinvent and govern our cities and regions, and ultimately, the ability to innovate and to share these innovations with other cities in a world which is increasingly global and interconnected.

New Scale of Planning
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City Regions

If cities are to become effective drivers of creative change - the mobilising forces of the new global order - they have to act in coherence with their wider context. This implies a complete overhaul and reconfiguration of policies and practices at city, regional, national and supra-national levels to cope with new paradigms and spatial realities. Ecological systems, economic activities or the transfer of knowledge capital are never restricted to or limited by the same borders which define governmental administrations or urban policies. Therefore the new scale of planning approach, containing the larger region and connected territorial structure, must be redefined.

City regions have emerged since the beginning of the 20th century around the major cities in the world. With global urbanisation, other metropolitan areas are devising integrated strategies of transportation, economic development and environmental protection in cooperation with neighbouring metropolitan areas. By building high speed rail networks, integrated with airports and regional transit links, these mega-regions improve mobility and strengthen economic links between individual cities within their polycentric network. The constituent cities mobilise investments in parallel into urban regeneration, local economic development and environmental improvements to ensure the full contribution of every urban node to the competitiveness of their surrounding region.

In the case of Bintan Island, the project was initiated by first understanding its strategic location in both the larger ASEAN context and its immediate sub regional connectivity. Without this wider context, Bintan Island would stand little chance of being successful or competitive in economic terms.

In the ASEAN Region

For our case we will elaborate on how the ASEAN region, an example of both hyper and dynamic growth, is planning for continued urban and economic development. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations is comprised of ten distinct countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines, Thailand, Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam) representing an organization which actively promotes a shared vision of economic growth, social progress and cultural development. Home to

a remarkable blend of people, cultures, and ecosystems, the ASEAN region is a highly desirable touristic and economic destination.

It covers an area of 4.48 million km^2 and has a population of approximately 600 million. In comparison, the European Union has roughly the same amount of land (4.32 million km2), but a smaller population of 500 million. The United States of America, with a total continental surface area of 8.08 million km2, is home only to 308 million people, approximately half of the population of the ASEAN region. The burgeoning middle-class in the ASEAN region and direct access to the immense population signifies a substantial and rapidly expanding market opportunity. From a demographic perspective, the ASEAN region has a natural competitive advantage with its high ratio of younger generation to total population, representing a healthy labour force in years to come. This stands in stark contrast to other regions, even within the rest of Asia, which are confronted with the challenges of providing for and sustaining a rapidly ageing population.

The organization for Economic Co-operation and Development Centre's (OECD) 2010 Southeast Asian Economic Outlook, illustrated a positive outlook for growth in the region with six of the major ASEAN countries (Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam) having emerged strongly from the global economic crisis.

In 2011, intra regional trade and investment flows in ASEAN showed an upward outlook, which will likely support domestic growth; "the aggregate GDP for the 10 member countries is forecast to grow with a relatively robust 5.4% in 2011" (Asia Development Bank. Asian Development Outlook 2011), while in the above mentioned six ASEAN countries, the annual average GDP growth for the 2011-2015 period is projected to be higher at 6%.

As a Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) destination, it continues to be an attractive region. FDI into ASEAN reached US $75.8 billion in 2010, doubling the 2009 level, and surpassing the pre-global crisis peak in 2007 of US$75.7 billion. Over the last ten years, FDI flows in ASEAN grew at an annual average rate of 19 % (ASEAN Secretariat News).

This moment of economic vitality presents an opportunity for the region to revise outmoded development strategies and consider balanced and sustainable development strategies for the future. As outlined by OECD, these include but are not limited

Figure 3: ASEAN population by Metropolitan Areas 2011
Source: ASEAN stats (2010). Graphic: Fundación Metrópoli

600 MILLION PEOPLE IN THE ASEAN REGION

Country	Population
Indonesia	231,370,000
Philippines	92,227,000
Vietnam	87,228,000
Thailand	66,903,000
Myanmar	59,534,000
Malaysia	28,306,000
Cambodia	14,958,000
Laos	5,922,000
Singapore	5,100,000
Brunei	406,000

Figure 4: ASEAN population by countries (2010)
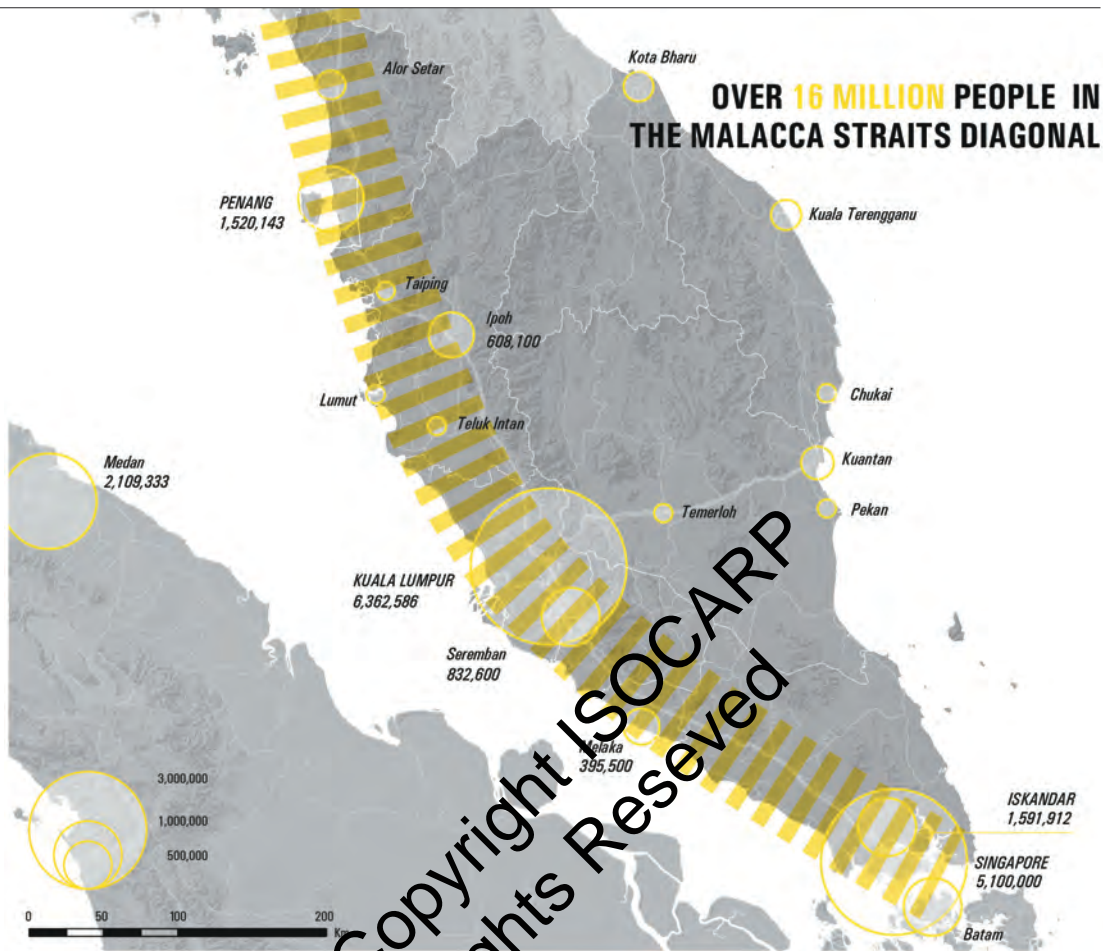Source: ASEAN stats (2010). Graphic: Fundación Metrópoli

Figure 5: Population in the Malacca Straits Diagonal
Source: Department of Statistics Malaysia (2011), Department of Statistics
Singapore (2011), ASEAN statistics (2010). Graphic: Fundación Metrópoli

to capitalizing on the accessibility to a large population and investing in human capital, supporting innovative industries for job creation, and enhancing the external competitiveness of the region by supporting new growth sectors and developing niche and specialty products. It is important that each sub region re-evaluate their specific growth strategies and develop new objectives for a more sustainable and balanced future. In order to capitalize on these new objectives, cities and regions will need to identify their unique strengths and strategic projects to better position themselves within regional urban hierarchies and capitalize on intrinsic competitive advantages.

The Malacca Straits Diagonal

One of the strongest concepts to emerge from the ASEAN region in recent history is that of the Malacca Straits Diagonal. The Malacca Straits Diagonal connects over 16 million urban inhabitants by land, primarily along the Malaysian Peninsula, through a system of national highways, rail corridors, ports and airports - sharing a strategic coastal orientation with the Malacca Straits opposite to Sumatra. This concentration of interconnected urban centers, economies, culture and people will establish the Malacca Straits Diagonal as driver of the ASEAN economy for decades to come. In the future, this dynamic economic corridor could be driven by

High Speed Rail (HSR) connectivity from Penang in the north to Iskandar and Singapore in the south - a rare opportunity in an otherwise geographically fragmented region.

A proposed network of High Speed Rail, particularly in relationship to passenger traffic, will help alleviate congestion on airports and airspace in the region. Currently, there are more than 600 weekly flights within the Malacca Straits Diagonal which ultimately translates into increased airport delays and safety concerns for the region. High Speed Rail, ideally connecting stations centrally located in urban centers, will provide an alternative to air travel, freeing airspace while providing uninterrupted business and communication connectivity between the different cities along the Diagonal. Recognizing that cities can no longer compete in isolation, the Malacca Straits Diagonal model assumes that cities are the protagonists of new economic development, drivers of the knowledge based economy, cradles of innovation, creativity and culture – capable of stimulating new models for growth in the region.

To approximate the strengths of the Malacca Straits Diagonal as an HSR corridor in the future, it is important to place it in reference to other international examples of rail connectivity. In testing its viability, we can better understand the optimal ranges for HSR connectivity, where the cost and time benefits outweigh those of private automobiles or air travel alternatives. This chart provides some of the best examples of HSR corridors in the world which we can compare with similar conditions in the Malacca Straits Diagonal.

One of the residual effects created by a well-articulated high speed rail system is the increased ability to connect the tourism industry in the region. In 2010, Malaysia received 24.6 million tourists while Singapore received 11.6 million over the same period. Given the direct accessibility to high quality urban centers, cultural and natural tourism destinations existing in the Malacca Straits Diagonal today, tourists will choose to combine primary destinations with second or third stops they would have otherwise not considered if requiring an additional flight. Bintan Island, located in close proximity to Singapore, a short fifty minute trip by high speed ferry, can capitalize on this increased access to tourism within the context of the Malacca Straits Diagonal.

Bintan Island and its Regional Context

Through deliberate engagement beyond its physical or national borders, Bintan Island can take full advantage of its strategic location as both the southern anchor to the Malacca Straits Diagonal (together with Singapore) and as a northern gateway to the Indonesian archipelago and its capital of Jakarta. In the broader geo-political context, Bintan Island is well positioned in the Indonesia–Malaysia–Singapore Growth Triangle (IMS-GT) which was established in 1994 to strengthen economic links in the region and optimize the complementary resources between the three countries. The IMS-GT originally began as the SIJORI Growth Triangle, which included a more exclusive designation of Singapore, Johor (Malaysia), and the Riau Islands (Indonesia) starting in 1989.

In the past decades, with improved relations between the Indonesian and Singaporean Governments, an agreement was signed to develop the Riau islands cooperatively to benefit both countries in the designated free trade zone of Batam, Bintan and Karimun Islands. An early result of this Government to Government (G to G) agreement was the allocation and designation of Bintan Resorts (BR), a beach and resort destination, covering 23,000 hectares (230 square kilometers) along the entire northern coastline of Bintan Island facing the South China Sea. This agreement enabled the growth of new investments and an integrated management of various components of the Island, which have proven critical to the future success of various diverse island developments.

The high quality of Bintan´s natural areas, climate, and beaches justifies the attraction of prominent development companies to invest in the area. The construction of basic infrastructure by the Singapore - Indonesia consortium has also been key to the viability and development of these different initiatives. To meet future development expectations for Bintan Island, the creation of modern infrastructure facilities began in 1991 with an investment of US $ 170 million, in addition to a new regional airport which broke ground in May of 2012. These investments are critical for Bintan to remain competitive both globally and within the ASEAN countries, with destinations such as Phuket and Bali. As Bintan Resorts strives to become one of the world´s leading tourist destination it is clear that a new approach is necessary.

OVER 600 WEEKLY FLIGHTS
(+ 31,000 flights per year)

IN THE MALACCA STRAITS DIAGONAL
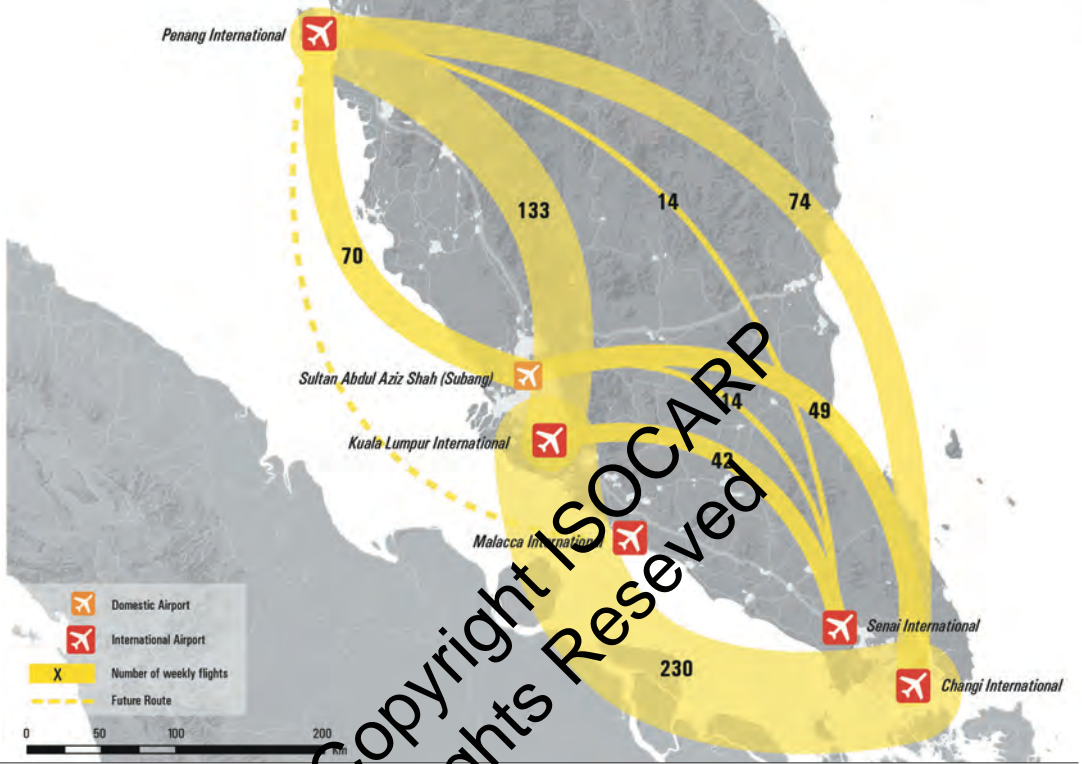
Figure 6: Weekly flight frequency in the Malacca Straits Diagonal
Source: Malaysia Airports Holding Berhad (2011), Changi Airport Singapore
(2011), Skyscanner (2011) Graphic: Fundación Metrópoli

Figure 7: Comparison of high speed rail corridors
Source: various. Graphic: Fundación Metrópoli

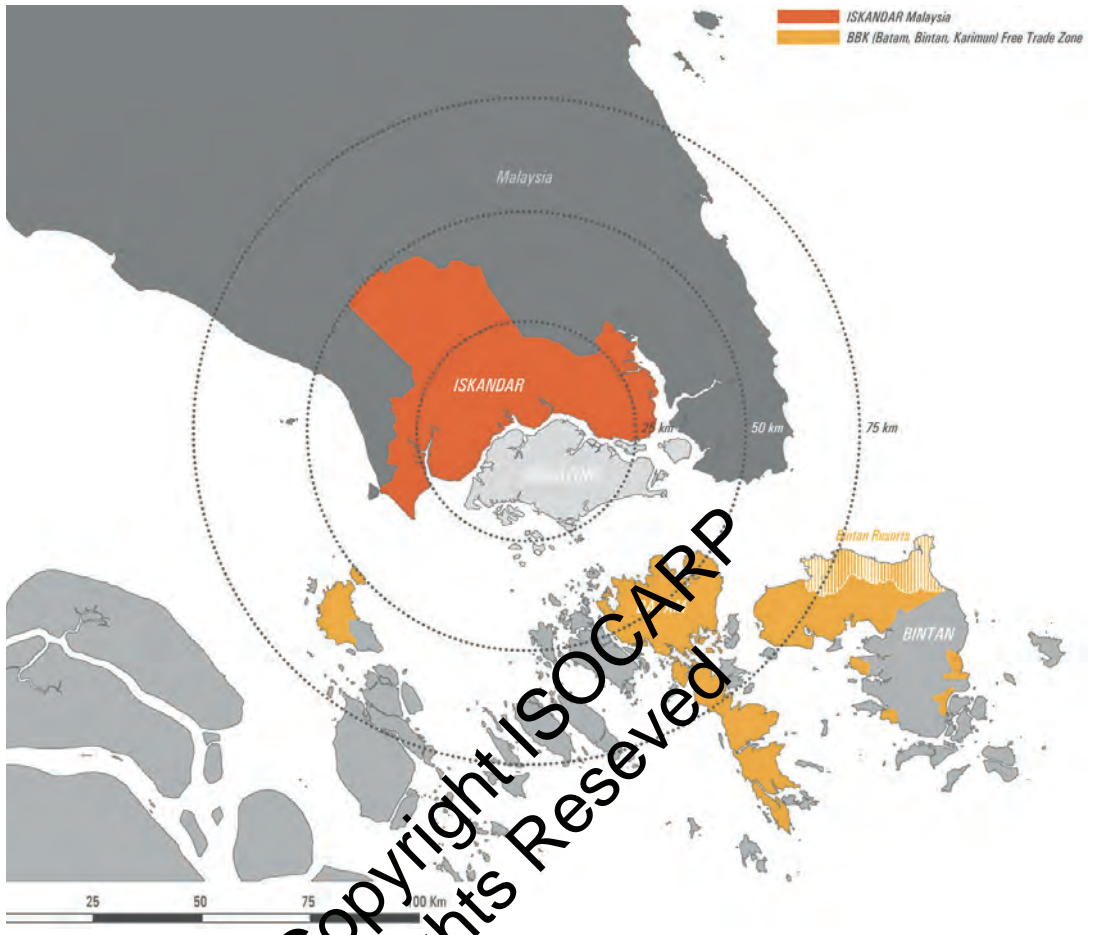| HUBS	DISTANCE (mi/km)	SPEED (mph/kph)	TIME	GAUGE	TRAIN
London-Paris	308 / 495	186 / 300	2.15	Standard	Eurostar (TGV)
Tokyo-Osaka	345 / 552	186 / 300	2.18	Standard	Shinkansen
Madrid-Barcelona	385 / 620	186 / 300	2.45	Standard	AVE
NYC-Wash DC	230 / 370	150 / 241	2.47	Standard	Acela Express

Figure 8: Special Economic Zones in the vicinity of Singapore
Source: Free Trade Zone and the Free Port of Bintan (2007), ISKANDAR Malaysia
Graphic: Fundación Metrópoli

Moving forward, the development of Bintan Island, as a laboratory for eco-urban development and sustainable design strategies, is seen as a vital step in creating new competitive advantages and long term economic and environmental sustainability for the territory. Building upon the geographic positioning adjacent to Singapore, spectacular natural resources and the already existing high level resorts and infrastructure, the next phase of development will center on a cohesive sustainable urban development vision which ties together current and future growth on the island.

Territorial Advantages
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A Pilot Opportunity for Indonesian Development
From a development policy point of view the project for Bintan Island continues the Indonesian agenda for sustainably conscious tourism. With the unveiling of a new brand for tourism, "Wonderful Indonesia", the Indonesian Minister of Culture and Tourism, Jero Wacik, announced that the 2011 Indonesian tourism theme would be "Eco, Culture and MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions)". This theme was chosen because the tourism sector

Searching for the Russian Dream Compression or Expansion of Russia's Living Space?

Fedor Kudryavtsev

Forward to future! Image by Mikhail Glagolev.
Retrieved from http://glagolev.35photo.ru/photo_377698/

"The planning approaches the leading countries have developed have to be adapted to our particular conditions. In particular, we should pay our attention to the way they are being applied in countries with a similar climate, economics and topography. I am speaking about North America, Canada.

In spite of our backwardness we should not copy anything as it is. Our own heritage of the centuries past is infinitely more valuable - still little known and studied but nurturing new ideas and new forms."
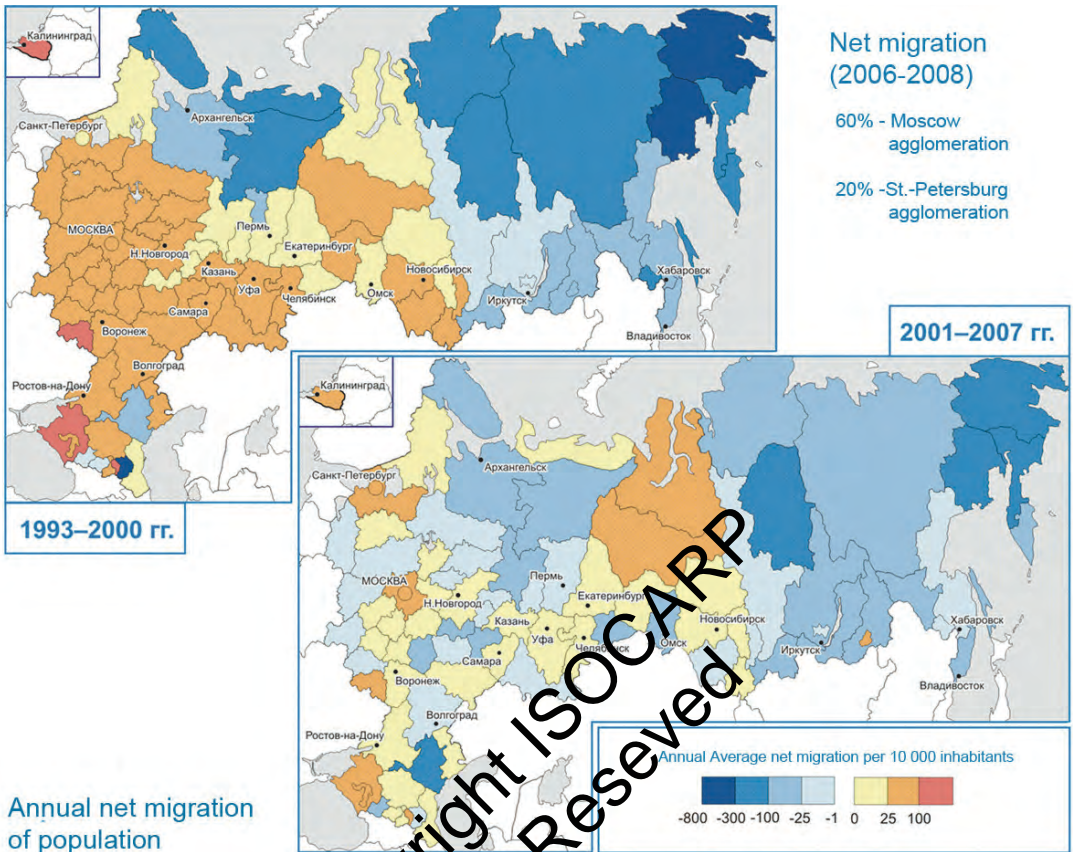
V.N.Semenov, Making cities better 1912 [1]

Suburbanization has been studied for a long time, and many researchers were revealing more problems than good things about it. Different suburbia in different countries leads to one and the same result: natural landscapes around the cities are replaced by 'one-storey America' or its analogy adjusted to local conditions. Unlike city blocks, this new milieu is comfortable for driving and becomes the new home for city dwellers, industry, trading centers and the headquarters of large enterprises.

The old city centers are losing their significance: public functions that used to constitute their core are now readily located in new business centers and shopping malls at the intersection of highways, or form an 'edge-less city'[2] with commercial development areas spreading along transport corridors and acting as an urban node for local communities. Road and utility networks expand, built-up areas sprawl rapidly, 'eating away' open space and natural habitat, the use of private transport grows - together with hydrocarbon consumption and carbon dioxide emissions - and with traffic jams as a consequence; at the same time the low population density makes it impossible to develop public transportation. The quality of social services falls off; the network of neighborhood interaction weakens; the common space breaks into a number of pieces that belong to different social layers and groups; and the increased costs of utility networks and land preparation makes housing less affordable.

So a reaction has set in and different ways are being suggested to bring people back to the cities, to make them 'liveable' once more, i.e. pedestrian focused, multifunctional, safe, filled with public spaces, and socially integrated. An international association of municipalities has been set up to follow these principles, and the prestigious Economist Intelligence Unit publishes an annual rating of cities according to certain 'liveability' criteria. Even in the USA, the 'cradle of suburbanization', an ideology of

Net migration
(2006-2008)

60% - Moscow
agglomeration

20% -St.-Petersburg
agglomeration

2001–2007 гг.

1993–2000 гг.

Annual net migration
of population

Annual Average net migration per 10 000 inhabitants

-800 -300 -100 -25 -1 0 25 100

'new urbanism' as a low-rise, but urban alternative to the amorphous suburb is gaining strength.

Alas! US statistics give little hope for a victory in that battle. In spite of some exceptions like New York, a breakdown of the figures for national population growth show a continued and growing emphasis on the suburbs as opposed to the cities, the population ratio rising from 85/15 in the 1990s to 91/9 in the 2000s[3].

Thus, suburbia in the US (and elsewhere) continues to grow insistently; everywhere there are opportunities for that. Most people do not want to dismiss the possibility to live in a private house or to use a private car in spite of all the merits of the compact and walkable city being fiercely advocated by planners.

Regarding the figures above, it seems most Americans believe their suburbs are as liveable as their cities. One can argue that they are set in their stereotypes, and that their megalopolises (with very

few exceptions, such as Seattle and Portland) have not yet started to improve. Then, where do these stereotypes come from? And why are they so stable? I think they derive from the very beginnings of American culture, concerning not only the immigrants but also the explorers who, 'liberated' from a densely populated Europe with its never-ending wars, entered the vast and indivisible area of the New World.

Its mostly level terrain became a resource for expansion and exploration. The wider the country grew, the greater was the need for a new form of settlements. The entrepreneurial Americans created that through the automobile - the newest technical achievement that gave them maximum freedom and speed.

Of course the American suburbs are quite different from settlement forms based on the compact town. Is this the prerequisite for a kind of cultural antagonism between an urban lifestyle and a suburban

Largest Cities of Russia and USA
Comparative Ranking by Population

Russia, 1913 [1]	USSR, 1989 [2]	Russia, 2010 [3]	USA, 2010 [4]
St. Petersburg	Moscow	Moscow	New York
Moscow	Leningrad	St. Petersburg	Los Angeles
Warsaw	Kiev	Novosibirsk	Chicago
Riga	Tashkent	Yekaterinburg	San Francisco
Kiev	Baku	Nizhny Novgorod	Dallas
Odessa	Kharkov	Samara	Houston
Lodz	Minsk	Omsk	Philadelphia
Kharkov	Gorky	Kazan	Detroit
Tbilisi	Novosibirsk	Chelyabinsk	Phoenix
Tashkent	Sverdlovsk	Rostov-on-Don	San Diego
Yekaterinoslav	Kuybyshev	Ufa	San Antonio
	Tbilisi	Saratov + Engels	
	Dnepropetrovsk	Volgograd	
	Yerevan	Perm	
	Odessa	Krasnoyarsk	
	Omsk		

Sources:
1. Savarenskaya N.F., Shvidkovsky D.O., Petrov F.A. The history of Urban Art. Mos... 9. P. 296-297
2. USSR Population Census, 1989
3. Russian Federation Population Census, 2010
4. Annual Estimates of the Resident Population for Incorporated Places o... 100,000, Ranked b... dy 1, 2008 Population: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2008

Figure 1 (left): Compression of the population: net migration in Russia. Source: N.I.Zubarevich, Independent institute for Social Policy. Public lecture "City, agglomeration, inhabitants, public governance: cacophony or harmony?" polit.ru/media/files/2012/02/01/2011.10.20_Zubarevich.ppt

Figure 2 (right): Largest cities of Russia and USA. Comparative ranking by population; Source V.A.Babourov, Laboratory of Urban Studies of Moscow Institute of Architecture. 2011

one, which has existed in the USA up to the present time, but has not yet occurred in Russia? Should mass migration to the suburbs be allowed to happen in Russia too? Doesn't Russia also possess a vast territory yet poorly developed?

Western style suburbanization of the Moscow region (not with a seasonal, as presently, but with a 'real' outflow of population from the core cities into the suburbs) is assumed by Russian geographers on the basis that people's income rises to the level of the Gross Regional Product per capita of the industrially developed countries. So if we Russians get richer, we will live as in America? But so far there is an overall depopulation (Figure 1) that concentrates people in big cities, mainly – capitals (Figure 2), and, as some Russian scientists are claiming, 'challenges the national self-awareness traditionally intended to explore new territories'.

The level of prosperity in today's Russia is truly far below the level that the US has reached but the need

for urban forms suitable for living in vast spaces (Figure 3) appeared here much earlier. The national culture has already found its own response to that challenge. Whatever the topography, the early planning patterns were following principles of spreading not concentrating (Figure 4), adapting to landscape instead of opposing it, developing built-up forms suitable for the seasonal mobility of their inhabitants, and they blurred the boundary between city and its environment (Figure 5).

Independent settlements, or the parts of towns that today could be figuratively be called 'protosuburbia', have existed in Russian culture for more than one thousand years, even on the lands with a climate much more severe than in the USA. From the times of market squares and old-Russian suburbs called 'posads' and 'slobodas', that unlike in medieval Europe were being developed well beyond the fortified central core of the old Russian towns, to the 'dachas' and 'gardeners' partnerships' of the Soviet time. The October coup of 1917 soon made it impossible to continue that tradition of 'picturesque freedom' of urban forms. For decades, Russia had to follow made-up town-planning doctrines based on social engineering. Eventually this led to the situation where a main goal of town-planning policy became a distribution of standard products delivered by an industry of mass-produced prefabricated housing. And the only one solution for the whole country, regardless of the climate, appeared to be a multistoried house in a densely built-up microdistrict - as part of the city periphery or as an independent quasi-urban form linked to a remote industrial unit. However, such conditions could not kill the traditions of becoming one with nature, though in other respects the old urban culture was almost completely destroyed. The 'apartment+dacha' model was the way out.

Generally a dacha is a land plot and house out of the city used by its inhabitants for temporary living, usually in the summer time. Initially this kind of temporary suburban residence appeared in the nineteenth century. As the cities were growing fast, a summer house became a popular place of living. Dachas can be found as a setting, a place of action in much classical Russian literature of that time. Facing problems with food production on the one hand, and with their desire to encourage and reward people like good engineers, writers, scientists, prominent party members, on the other, the Soviet

Figure 3: I.Levitan. Over eternal peace. 1894. State Tretyakov Gallery. One of the iconic painting of Russian natural landscape and symbols of a Russian spirit

Figure 4: Russian Village nowadays; http://ne-status.livejournal.com/11384.htm.

Figure 5: Traditional small city (Myshkin, Volga riverhead area); http://massagela.ru/alb/image.asp?27047

authorities exploited that old tradition and they handed out land for free - first to selected people only and later on more and more massively.

These could be small plots of 400 - 600 sq.m which were supposed to be a place for the cultivation of fruits and vegetables for family use. Such land was tenanted, ownership being retained by the state. Organised as gardeners' partnerships, these areas were considered as agricultural with no permanent structures officially allowed, apart from tiny sheds. In other cases, the site was bigger - from one to three thousand sq.m and often situated in a forest; that was a real dacha - a place for vacation and the work of artists, not for hard routine work (Figure 6). While in some cases, comprehensive improvements were provided, generally it was for the occupants to provide the necessary utilities, so the level of comfort varied substantially. Generally, houses that were constructed as dachas were not envisaged to be a place of permanent living.[4]

Left on the periphery of a state housing policy that was focused on the construction of multi-storey blocks, and formally considered as recreational areas or subsidiary plots of agricultural production, these suburban areas spread all over the country. In practice they became one of the centers of social and family life, and a symbol of our national lifestyle in the eyes of foreigners and, indeed, Russians themselves.

In the early 1990s, as soon as people gained greater freedom, they began, as much as they could, to develop the liveable part of their world - meaning their dachas as no great changes could be made to a standardized apartment. The more comfortable the country house became, either in an 'elite' gated community or in a village, the greater was the role of such housing compared to the urban dwelling, and the greater the ratio of time spent in the country house. People began to prefer that living, while using their apartment as an 'intermediate base' near their work or renting it out to get additional revenue.

Over the last decade one can observe a new phenomenon of 'distant dachas' (Figure 7) located hundreds and even thousands of km from megalopolises, often on depopulated lands almost abandoned by rural residents. This displays a certain irrational aspiration to restore connections with nature and old traditions, as well as to explore new territories.

So people drive for upwards of five hours along often bad roads to spend a few days of 'real life'. It

is about the need to live somewhere free and untrammeled in a vast, limitless space with almost untouched nature. That seems to be something as natural to Russian culture, formed in the great rivers basins, as the special attitude that the British have towards their surrounding sea.

Thus, it is not only possible, but also inevitable that in the near future Russia will need to shift towards a more spaced out, decentralized and polycentric settlement form, with housing at a lower density, while accommodating increased migration within the country.

Nevertheless, these important changes that show the huge potential and the necessity to enlarge the nation's built areas are officially ignored and nothing is being done to accommodate them. Unfortunately, in Russia, within the last two decades, citizens have neither a network of freeways that is so typical for the US suburbs, nor a system of nationwide high-speed railways as in France and Germany.[5] And neither are there any plans for these.

At the same time, the highly centralized national tax system usually leave too little for the municipal budget so is not capable of funding public amenities for new housing areas. So the burden of those costs falls on investors. Thus the housing must either be very expensive or very dense and cheap or it will end up without public amenities and become a temporary or second home. The reality is that the suburban development demanded by people is developing in inappropriate ways and is failing to meet their aspirations to live less densely.

The result is fierce competition for vacant suburban land between gated communities and private multi-storied developments that is shaping the outskirts of big Russian cities as centers of population concentration. With all their external differences, both typologies are a realization of one and the same town-planning principle, modified according to the paying capacity of different social groups. This is an isolated and closed 'island', where making connections with the outside world is left to individual initiative.

Areas of low rise housing, both new and old, usually still have the official status of gardeners' partnerships, so on paper it is still agricultural land not subject to local building regulations. Local authorities are not obliged to provide public services there. In other words a settlement can officially be considered almost as a field while people can now

SEARCHING FOR THE RUSSIAN DREAM COMPRESSION OR EXPANSION OF RUSSIA'S LIVING SPACE?

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Figure 6: Dacha of B.Paternak, author of "Doctor Zhivago". Built in 30s near Moscow by Ernst May design, now in city periphery area.
http://www.liveinternet.ru/users/appassionata/post162049598/

Figure 7: "Distant" dacha, St.-Petersburg Region
http://www.locman.net/foto_15724__1l0l0l0l0l0.htm
by Dmitry Kazakov

Figure 8: 'New Scotland' "affordable" gated community,
14 km from Moscow
http://www.zimsad.com/fotos/data/1110/1775013353_1.jpg

live there permanently, attracted by the more comfortable houses they can build and the new lifestyle that it enables. And they are disuaded from living in the cities by the high costs or unavailability of something comparable.

In the case of 'upper-class' areas, all the necessary infrastructure is gradually developed privately in the surroundings while the settlement itself has a seemingly fortified perimeter. In respect of the dachas, the public services do not generally consider those areas to be truly residential; their occupants are officially registered at their urban apartments and so they are to some extent excluded from the local community.

Developers of the new suburban micro-districts provide all the public amenities including schools, utilities and internal roads, the cost being included in the price of apartments. However, this seriously limits their size - typically, only 10% of apartments will have two bedrooms, all the others being smaller, reflecting the buying capacity of the middle class. So families with two children have no possibility to live really comfortably and have a proper living-room; instead, that room tends to be used as a master bedroom.

Accordingly, for more than 60 years, industrial, multi-storied housing has been relied upon, though the milieu it creates becomes less and less comfortable because of the constantly growing density of development and population. If the blocks of the 60s were five storeys high, those of the 70s, 9-12 storey, and those of the 80s, 14-16 storeys, nowadays the economy class apartment blocks provided by developers in suburban areas are usually 17-25 storeys high and have a FAR of 1.5-2.5.

Being unable to solve Russia's housing problem due to insufficient production, and high prices which limit the range of dwelling types, this form of building is nonetheless trusted by central government; it dominates the market and it is welcomed by local authorities as often the only way to support local infrastructure.[6]

Thus in the absurd situation where the biggest country in the world fails to invest in its own infrastructure and is 'washing money' out of the municipalities, an unnatural and uncomfortable built-up fabric starts to flourish. Contrary to North America where the latest suburban areas have attained an improved level of planning integrity, the surroundings of Russian cities are becoming a mess of functions and urban typologies confronting each other;

thus multi-storey apartment blocks are neighbors to low-rise dwellings and villages, warehouses occupy former agricultural areas close to dachas, etc.

In the context of a weak local government, the system of settlements breaks into many inward looking and badly fragmented milieu of unconnected pieces like micro-districts, gated communities, dacha areas and pseudo gardeners' partnerships (the latter have now nothing really in common with agriculture but lawns and flowers in front of the house). So while housing conditions become more comfortable for some, suburbia in general often resembles a large-scale house building 'turned sideways' - dense, ugly and uncomfortable.

This new environment can be called "disurbia", or a disintegrated city. This substitution is properly reflected by the language; terms like 'the territories are developed' and 'low-rise housing is located' are now common, replacing 'settlements are developed' and 'towns are built'. Attitudes towards the natural environment have also changed, from that of a deep affection for the open natural landscape as a setting for Russia's rural fabric, picturesque silhouettes and the layouts of old Russian cities, to one of a persistent ignorance of this heritage – which is a step towards its destruction. The more people get used to being encircled in their local and isolated communities (Figure 8) the less they associate themselves with the landscape around them - instead it becomes to them a dangerous place, a place of strangers.

The current model of territorial development, with no integral infrastructure (and) realised by regional and municipal authorities, scarce local budgets, no landscape planning on a strategic scale, and investment models sufficient only for making dense and simplified housing fragments or luxury houses, is a logical outcome of the existing system of public governance, property and tax legislation, current construction technologies, etc. But it is absurd in relation to the opportunities and potential that Russia's landscape resource offers as a place for living.

This present approach works neither for the development of settlements nor for the preservation of natural landscapes that cities need to incorporate very carefully. The result can be briefly defined as 'plenty of land – nowhere to live': no good landscape, no efficient transport infrastructure, no affordable housing and less and less integrity in urban and especially suburban areas.

As with every unnatural thing, this model is bound

to fall into pieces anyway – for example, the drastically increased 'automobilization' of households, now at 48%, will soon 'kill' the hyperdense residential microdistrict as a typology of large-scale market dwelling provision, just because of the lack of parking spaces. Its less densely build-up Soviet predecessors were designed for a motorisation rate of about 100 cars only per thousand inhabitants. But better to put an end to it as soon as possible.

It is necessary to reject the two main tenets of today's town-planning policy that promoted this model. First, that it is possible to develop the country without due involvement of its settlements as key actors, and properly empowered local governments. The falseness of this idea is attested to by the inadequacy of a federal housing policy that considers housing affordability only as a mortgage provision, land access for investors and utilities connection problem, while ignoring environmental quality and the living conditions of occupants.

The second tenet is that nowadays in Russia it is natural to have infrastructural and settlement 'compression' as a reflection of global tendencies for the concentration of population in the 'leading' cities. But it is no longer the big cities that are now competing worldwide but urban and suburban regions integrated by advanced transportation and communication networks.

The alternative way ahead is an overall support for a spatial expansion and strengthening of the settlement system in Russia based on the people's aspiration for their own country to provide a good living environment, as is shown by the 'suburbanization' developed by people themselves often out of the real estate market. It is senseless to deny the necessity to develop big cities and their significance. But it is no less senseless to make the development of a dozen or twenty agglomerations the only focus of nationwide policy as was last year announced by the former minister of economic development. Russia's territory cannot and will never be equally populated, but it should be used to the maximum extent compatible with its climate, topography, and natural landscapes.

To achieve this alternative vision for Russia's development, we need, first, to see settlements as a complex social and spatial environment instead of a conglomerate of isolated territories, and settlement building as a process to be managed in the context of an independent, active and properly resourced lo-

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cal government. Secondly, we need an integrated transport and communication infrastructure developed by regional and federal government, which suits the country's conditions and efficiently connects settlements with each other and with the outside world.

These steps will make it possible to move around the country to experience a more even level of public amenities, albeit amenities organized in different ways accordingly to local needs, and for citizens to live and feel comfortably at home in different parts of Russia. When young - to live in a big city, when as a family with children – in a suburb, when retired – in a dacha. Or perhaps in some other way, the choice should be there.

Russia's strategic inexhaustible resource, its land area, should be used as intensively and diversely as possible. What the country needs is not a further concentration of population, but the conditions for maximum mobility based both on the private car, which is natural for that scale of space, and on public transport and a freedom of choice of urban and suburban development forms.

While preserving the integrity, the unity with nature and the beauty of the Russian historical cities, we

should create our version of a kind of 'broadacre city' that allows us not just to survive, but to live in a way that is friendly to our nature and culture. The expansion of our settlements network means a growing complexity and variety of opportunities while its shrinking equates to simplification and degradation. Both processes are self-supporting and once started are difficult to stop. Which one will happen? This is the choice Russia is now about to make.

Endnotes

1 Vladimir N. Semenov - Russian architect and town planner. In the beginning of the twentieth century he spent several years working in England where he was greatly inspired by new ideas in town planning, first of all - garden cities. Having returned to Russia, he published the book the quotation has been taken from, the first Russian book on contemporary planning. Soon after he designed and build the first Russian 'garden city' near Moscow, Prozorovskaya. In the 1930s, he and Sergey E. Chernyshov developed the Plan of Moscow Reconstruction - one of the biggest urban projects realised in the twentieth century worldwide.

2 Harrison, Truman A. From Edge to Edgeless City: The 21st Century Transformation of Metropolitan Atlanta / Truman A.Harrison // Planning in a more Globalized and Competitive World: Proceedings of XXXIX International ISOCARP Congress. Edited by Paolo La Greca: Italy Gangemi Editore, 2004. C.237-252

3 Eric Jaffe. *So Are People Moving Back to the City or Not?* //The Atlantic Cities Nov.14 2011: http://www.theatlanticcities.com/arts-and-lifestyle/2011/11/so-are-people-moving-back-city-or-not/487/

4 This description is schematic, there were many different cases of second homes, all being referred to as dachas.

5 There were only two lines built - Moscow-St-Petersburg and Moscow-Nizhny Novgorod, not a network.

6 There were Soviet predecessors which, nevertheless, were not so isolated. However gardeners' partnerships were usually surrounded by a common fence and could have only one entrance, so being a kind of 'urban colony on rural land'.