



KATRI PYNNÖNIEMI

New Road, New Life, New Russia

International transport corridors at the conjunction
of geography and politics in Russia



ACADEMIC DISSERTATION

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...a weeping of trees precedes the clear-cuts –
it is like a distant, unattainable horizon
fleeing before you no matter how much you try to reach it.
Please, do not get angry, you small birch trees and pines.
Please do not complain.
Because to overcome the distance – that truly is the destiny of Russia.
Yevgeni Yevtushenko¹

In Russia it is always the future that is thought of.
John Steinbeck²

¹ An extract from the poem “Clear-cut” (Hakkuu). Cited in Backström 1979. I thank poet and researcher Tero Mustonen for kindly translating the poem for me.

² Steinbeck 2000, 59.

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In Helsinki on April 10th 2008

Katri Pynnöniemi

Preface

Close to my childhood home is a path that we kids used as a playground. On one occasion we decided to dig a hole in the ground in the middle of this path, and we found a rusty spike. Some twenty years later, when travelling in the depths of Siberia, I came across a similar spike, this time on an existing pair of rails on the Circum-Baikal railway. The two spikes were almost identical because they had the same function: to nail the railway tracks to the wooden sleepers. But for me, the chance encounter with that spike on the shore of Lake Baikal was an instance of recognition, a trace of remembrance that transported me back to my childhood and which, at the same time, marked the beginning of the story about the roads of Russia.

The path where we played had once been part of the industrial railway line. The traffic along this narrow gauge track had ceased in the early 1970s. Today, the only trace of the route's previous function is semantic: local people call it *paana*. The word has a similar root to the German word *bahn* and the English word *path*. However, the narrow gauge of 1435 mm is commonly known as the standard gauge, used by sixty per cent of the world's railways. But in Finland the narrow gauge is regarded as an exception, since Finnish railways use the 'broad gauge' of 1524 mm. It is slightly wider than the one used in Russia (1520 mm), but both gauges are interchangeable in practice.

The eighty-one millimetre difference between the Russian railways and the railways used in most European countries dates back to the mid-nineteenth century when the tsarist government in Russia was building its first major railway between St. Petersburg and Moscow. At the time of planning in 1842, the current standard had not yet been considered as such and the Russian railway planners preferred the broad gauge because, as suggested by foreign advisers, it would ensure stability at high speeds. Thus, when the railway from St. Petersburg to Moscow was inaugurated in 1851, a technical barrier to the integration of the Russian and European economies was created at the same time.³

³ Westwood 1964, 30–31. Today the broad gauge is used in the Baltic states, Ukraine, Belarus, the Caucasian and Central Asian republics, and Mongolia. The main railway networks of Spain and Portugal use a wider gauge than the standard one. However, the new high-speed passenger lines in Spain have been built to the standard gauge to allow these lines to link to the European high-speed network. In the United States several gauges were used until 1886 when the railways were converted to the standard gauge.

In an interview for the Russian radio station *Mayak* in June 2004, the Russian Minister of Transport Igor Levitin referred to this gap when he commented on the cooperation between Russia and the EU in the transport sphere. According to Minister Levitin, the principal problems reside in the sphere of ideas rather than practices. “A deeply rooted belief among Europeans that Russia does not have normal roads” is more harmful for Russia’s aspirations to reinforce its status as a transit country between Europe and Asia than the technical difference between the narrow European and the wide Russian railway gauges. Minister Levitin admitted that the “myth” about Russian roads is not entirely false, but emphasized that “a positive change is underway”.⁴

The title of this thesis is taken from the ceremonial opening of the federal road section between Chita and Khabarovsk in Eastern Siberia in February 2004.⁵ The slogan “New Road! New Life! New Russia!” captures the crucial relationship between infrastructures and the emerging new ‘form of life’ in Russia. The private car owner, truck driver or taxi driver is no longer a *de facto* participant in “illegal economic activities”⁶ but uses his or her constitutional right to travel and to do business. However, the wonderful word ‘road’ has retained its profoundly paradoxical meaning in the context of the post-Soviet Russian politics.

The ‘road’ denotes a vision of the fast movement forward “into the disappearing distance...”.⁷ This embraces the idea of the dynamic, far-reaching change that has been taking place, from the heroic digging of the Socialist future to the continuous rearrangement (*obustroistvo*) of the new and old elements. In this latter sense, the word “road” carries with it a reference to incompleteness. This incompleteness is a feature of the lack of roads and the poor condition of existing ones. Yet, the common conception that Russia’s roads are often best described as mere directions has a positive undertone. The wayward character of Russian roads is frequently romanticized. For, as expressed by Dmitri Lihatshev: “fast driving is striving for an open space”.⁸ The fast driving compensates for what Russia lacks in the organization of its space into a network of roads.

In this regard, former President Putin’s reflection upon the perception of Russia offers a slightly different vision. Speaking at the international press

⁴ Radio Mayak 21.6.2004 19:15 MSK.

⁵ Kommersant 27.2.2004.

⁶ During the Soviet years, trucks, taxis and private cars were ‘non-official vehicles’ that provided transport for the second economy, a version of the planned economy. Grossman 1981, 80.

⁷ Gogol 1996, 247–248.

⁸ Lihatshev 1994, 124; Pipes 1992, 118.

conference held in January 2006, Putin asserted that it was Russia's aim to be an "integral part of the West, yet special. Russia would travel the same road as the rest of Europe, along its eastern edge".⁹ In this context, the word 'road' is used metaphorically to convey a sense of similarity between the Russian and European 'paths' of development, as well as the difference in respect of the 'journey' that Russia has embarked upon. This is a vision of Russia in the globalizing world where the traditional notion of 'opening a window' to Europe is supplanted by an understanding of Russia as a 'gateway', a participant in the 'space of flows' of the post-industrial, developed world.

The vision of the same road does not yet indicate whether Russia is going in the same direction as the rest of Europe. In fact, the whole notion of the 'path' is questionable because of the inherent assumption of unidirectionality and the clearly demarcated edges of the 'path'. Rather than engaging in a discussion familiar from the literature of transitology, on whether Russia is following its own 'path' of development or that of others, I suggest we try to understand the features of Russia's 'journey' by elaborating on the way in which Russians in their concrete practices situate their country within the trajectory of its history and thought.¹⁰

This study subscribes to the interpretative tradition in social thought by seeking to reconstruct the logic of practical action in Russia's policy-making. Accordingly, the word 'road' is not interpreted metaphorically. Rather, the building of infrastructures¹¹ is considered as one such instance of practical action. The study shows how a specific way of setting up a societal order – one heavily dependent on a specific kind of social planning – yields a specific kind of infrastructure. Thus, this is a study of Russia's rebuilding and a culture-specific way of configuring space and time.

⁹ Cited in Karppinen 2006, 238.

¹⁰ For a similar approach, see Neumann 1996; Kingston-Mann 1999; Karppinen 2006.

¹¹ I will study the reasoning for policies on the road and railway infrastructure building, and the building of new ports mainly, although not exclusively, in North-West Russia. The development of electricity lines, oil and gas pipelines and social infrastructure is excluded from the analysis. For previous studies on electricity and heating system reforms, see Collier 2004; Solanko 2006.

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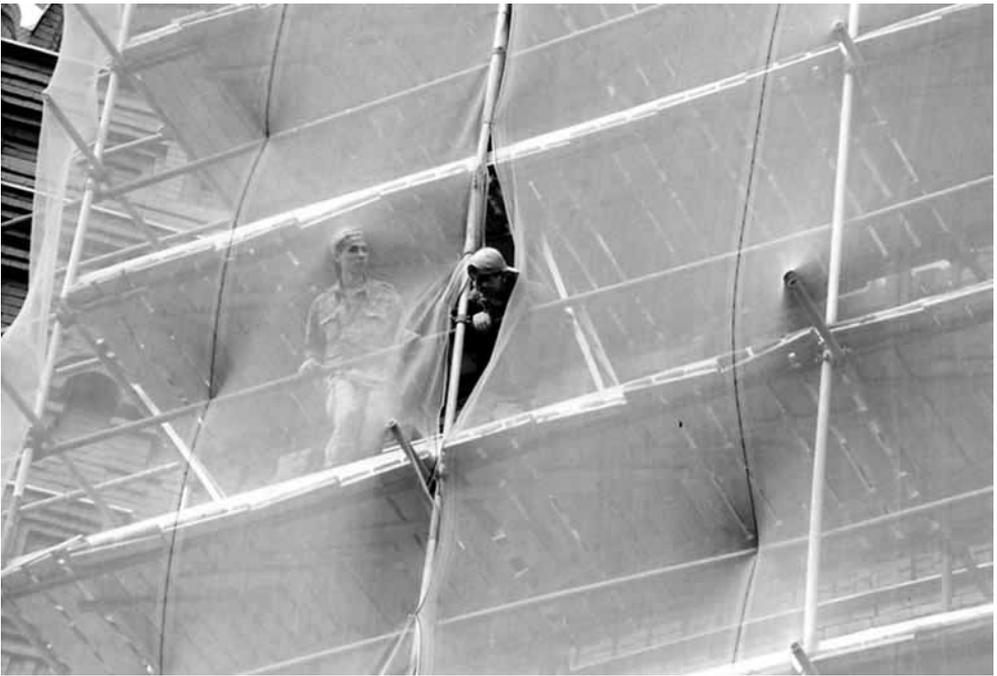
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Abbreviations

BAM	The Baikal-Amur railroad
BEATA	The Barents Euro-Arctic Area
EBRD	The European Bank of Reconstruction and Development
ECMT	The European Conference of Ministers of Transport
ETC	United Transport System (from Russian Edinaya Transportnaya Sistema)
EU	The European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GDP	Cross-Domestic Product
Gosplan	The State Planning Commission
Gossnab	The State Committee for Material Technical Supply
CES	The Common Economic Space
CEEC	The Central and Eastern Europe
CIS	The Commonwealth of Independent States
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SOFE	Theory of the Optimal Functioning of the Socialist Economy
TACIS	Technical Assistance for the Commonwealth of Independent States
TEN-T	The Trans-European Transport Network
TINA	The Transport Network Needs Assessment
UN/ECE	The United Nations Economic Council of Europe
NIS	Newly Independent States
NKPS	Ministry of Ways and Communications of the Soviet Union
MID	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation
MTK	International Transport Corridor (from Russian Mezhdunarodnyi Transportnyi Koridor)

I

Introduction: The Rebuilding of Russia



The State Historical Museum, Moscow, Russia, May 2003. Photograph by the author.

1 The plight of incompleteness

1.1 The new Russia: *dolgostroï*, *novostroïka*, or *gosstroïka*?

Reform is the sort of thing that, once it gets going, there is nothing you can do about it.

M.E. Saltykov-Shcherdin¹

Notwithstanding the general proclivity for incompleteness, contingency and abruptness in Russian politics, this research is about the rebuilding (*obustroïtstvo*) of the Russian polity after collapse of the Soviet Union and the futures that are inscribed in the way the building process unfolds. I work on the thought that the reasoning of the Russian policy² on ‘pan-European transport corridors’ is one instance at which this rebuilding is actualized. The ‘pan-European transport corridor’ concept was introduced in the mid-1990s as the embodiment of an idea for an “all-European transport policy”. This study asks, what kind of semantic ‘currency’ is the concept of the ‘pan-European transport corridor’ and for what purposes is it employed in the context of Russian politics? As a starting point, it is argued that in Russia the development of three ‘pan-European transport corridors’ on Russian territory is the very conjunction point of three major processes: the fragmentation of the post-Soviet space, the integration of Russia into the global markets and the EU, and the reorganization of Russian polity. These are at the same time the major challenges in Russia’s rebuilding.

In a very commonsensical use of the word, each new road section, railway juncture or new bridge that is built (*stroït*) marks a step further away from the Soviet period. However, failure to complete the building process (*postroït*) and the emergence of, not a new road, but an unfinished arrangement (*dolgostroï*) adds to the confusion: What is this new Russia all about? Furthermore, is the *evroremont*, that is, restructuring according to European standards, of all Russian roads sufficient, or even required in order to do things differently? Yes, indeed, what would the prefix *evro* denote in this context? Does it refer to the quality of

¹ Cited in Baturin 1995, 401.

² A policy is here defined as “a purposeful course of action designed and implemented with the objective of shaping future outcomes in ways that will be more desirable than would be otherwise expected”. Definition by Anderson cited in Soroos 1986, 19. Parsons 2003, 76–93. See also Healey 1993; Fischer 1993.

the building process, and that of the restructuring rather than the reconstruction of the post-Soviet Russian economy? Or is it just a label – a semantic trace of remembrance and Russia's affiliation with something *European*?

Metaphors related to building process have been central in outlining change in the post-Soviet Russia. The word *obustroit'* became widely known in Russian political parlance with Solzhenitsyn's article *Kak nam obustroit' Rossiyu* (*How to Rebuild Russia*), published in 1990 in *Komsomolskaya Pravda* and *Literaturnaya Gazeta*.³ The word to rebuild⁴ (*obustroit'*), denotes a sense of 'putting in order', 'rearranging' in this case the creation of a new spatio-political assemblage. The political connotation of the word can be aptly summed up with reference to President Yeltsin's address to the Federal Assembly in February 1996. "I can tell you as a construction worker", Yeltsin started, referring to his own past experiences on the Soviet construction sites:

We have finished the zero stage, erected the walls and are ready to build a roof over them. And we all are living on this construction site, with construction in full swing. This is both uncomfortable and dangerous. We see disorder and builders' refuse around us, with subsoil waters eroding the foundation. I have openly and directly talked about this before. But the new building of Russian statehood has been built, in the main. We can go over to the next stage, called painting and decorating in construction parlance. And we should think about how we are going to live in this house.⁵

Yeltsin's analogy succeeds in capturing the sense of revolutionary dreaming characteristic of Russian thinking. In the context of Soviet ideology, this revolutionary dreaming stemmed from the notion of an "active changing of the world" in terms of which space was understood as collective action rather than passive location.⁶ The beginning of socialism was brought closer by the collective

³ Solzhenitsyn 1991.

⁴ In the everyday usage of the word, the noun *obustroistvo* or verb *obustroit'* is used in connection with the fixing of a (new) apartment. It means "putting in order", "beautification" of the furniture, curtains, bed linen etc. that give an apartment a personal, homely look. See e.g. <http://www.odv.ru>. On the metaphor of the building and the path in Russian political discourse see Baranov and Karaulov 1994.

⁵ Yeltsin 1996, 35–36. In the Soviet years Yeltsin worked as a bricklayer, concrete-maker, truck-driver, carpenter, glass-cutter, and plasterer on the construction site in the city of Yekaterinburg (Sverdlovsk) before his career in the Moscow party echelons of power began. Aron 2000, 20.

⁶ Russian philosopher Nicolas Berdyaev explains that in the Soviet context freedom was understood as an "active changing of the world" and a "collective construction of life in the general direction of the communist party". This type of freedom did not recognize the individual right to choose or freedom of conscience. The idea of active space can also be

thrust of ‘miracle-working’ heroic workers *providing* the shock of historical change.⁷ This was articulated also in the monuments dedicated to the *building of Socialism*.

Illustrative of this active changing, the gigantic construction projects of the Soviet era played an important role in fostering the new socialist reality, rebuilding not only new industry and infrastructure but, first and foremost, a new man, and a new society and a new country. With the Soviet ideology gone, the fervour that was characteristic of the official representation of the building process has naturally been lost too. An interesting question worth posing is: How are the Soviet era *dolgostroi* projects perceived in today’s Russia? Yeltsin seemed to suggest that the building of a new Russia was not a *gosstroika*, a building created primarily in the interests of the state. The ambiguity of the message relates to Yeltsin’s suggestion that the building is already in a good enough condition to make it to the next stage: to the decoration and ‘putting-the-house-in-order’ stage. However, it is a departure from the Soviet public statements, for the idea of the stages of development does not refer to ideological (building of communism) or comparative (reaching and overturning capitalist states) policy objectives. Rather, what is suggested here is an image of a *house* that is built for people to live in. Russian exit from the Soviet past is imagined as a rebuilding project which creates new conditions for living.

Similarly, president Putin’s annual address to the Federal Assembly at the beginning of his second term in office in May 2004 played with the analogy of building. But whereas President Yeltsin conveyed a sense of the rebuilding of Russia in his speech, Putin focused on the opposite: the dismantling of the previous system. The first stage of rebuilding indicated by Yeltsin was, in Putin’s view, all about the dismantling of the old economic system, whereas the stage of “living on this construction site” referred to above, was later described as the “time of clearing the debris”. The point of the Putin’s speech, and one which takes it outside the framework in which Yeltsin was speaking, was recognition of the third stage of development in terms of “a possibility to achieve more rapid development and resolve more ambitious national tasks”. Hence, the ‘building’ is viewed with reference to “our economic survival” and Russia’s “deserved place” in the changing international conditions.⁸

found in Heidegger and his understanding of space as an activity of being-in-the-world. Berdyayev 1960, 152; Heidegger 1997; Crang 2005, 204.

⁷ Buck-Morss 2002a, 111, 212, 181. Cf. Weiner 2005, 212; Kotkin 1995, 203; Pynnöniemi 2006a.

⁸ Putin 2004. Cf. Bacon, Renz and Cooper 2006, 8.

This research contributes to this broad discussion on *obustroistvo* – the rebuilding of Russian polity and the new place for Russia in world politics – by focusing on one instance of adaptation to changing international conditions, the development of transport infrastructures. With the emphasis on international competitiveness and active role of the country in global politics the previous vocabulary on infrastructure development is replaced by a new set of ‘code words’ such as ‘transparency’, ‘market’, and ‘international transport corridor’, of which the latter term is coined in the Russian discussion on integration of transport infrastructures with the EU and other adjacent regions.

However, when the commonly used words are replaced by the new ones, it does not automatically follow that the structure underlying the system of words changes as well. “On the contrary”, wrote Ilmari Susiluoto, anthropologist and political scientist, just before the collapse of the Soviet Union, “by removing old implausible symbols and adding new fresh ones the Soviet leadership has been able to defend the status quo. In other words, ‘radical reform’ in the USSR can actually be interpreted as an attempt to preserve the system”.⁹ Can the same be said of the contemporary Russia and the term ‘international transport corridor’? Is it just a label or figure of speech that does not imply consequences in the *rebuilding* the Russian polity in the way in which it is put in order? This study is an attempt to find answer to this question. Although this study is not about economic thought in Russia nor the possibilities of the market reforms in the country, economic change provides a context for studying Russia’s rebuilding. In seeking to study this agentive context in which the ‘international transport corridor’ becomes a political site, I benefit from the earlier studies conducted on the evolution of market thinking in Russia.

1.2 Approaching Russia’s economic transformation

Unlike the Bolshevik revolution when Marxist ideas had matured into the Russian discussion as much as a generation before 1917, the Soviet system collapsed before “the swing in economic thinking in the West had had much popular impact inside Russia”. “At the end of 1980s”, writes Thane Gustafson, “only a small number of Russians had been exposed to market thinking”.¹⁰ This view is com-

⁹ Susiluoto 1990, 79; Fleron 1996.

¹⁰ The same did not apply to the Soviet block as a whole as demonstrated by deviations from the Marxist doctrine in the former Yugoslavia or in Hungary. See e.g. Hanson 1992;

patible with President Yeltsin's, who was reluctant to compare developments in the 1990s with the revolution of 1917. This was because the current changes were not about turning everything upside down but rather about "searching for a more convenient, more rational, more modern means of existence". "We are already living", emphasized Yeltsin, "not getting ready to live. That's probably the premise from which we should start. We live in a normal country: just a country with a slightly complicated heritage and difficult fate".¹¹ Yeltsin's statement is an invitation to replace and challenge the transition narrative and its assumption of discontinuity with one where the 'tragic incompleteness' of Russia's transformation is taken as a basic point of departure.¹²

There have been attempts to put "unwholeness"¹³ of Russia's transformation into perspective by visualizing the transformation of Russia's economy as a journey through a steep, uncharted mountain range. The dispute about whether or not a particular path exists along which one can make one's way is:

Defined by historical conjuncture and political institutions, while the context of crisis influences how urgently the mountaineers look for it. But even if a path exists and the mountaineers are prepared to look for it, they may still not find it. By studying contour maps after the expedition ends, one can determine whether there was a path for them to find – in other words, whether or not a politically feasible reform package existed.¹⁴

Andrei Shleifer and Daniel Treisman argue for an approach whereby Russia's economic reforms are scrutinized by asking *how* to reform rather than *when*, and under what conditions certain reform policies should or should not be implemented. The basic assumption in their study was that mountaineers traverse *without a map* and their success or failure in reaching the top of the mountain is conditioned by their capacity to 'navigate by the sun, how to ford streams

Sorensen 2001, 43–44; Gustafson 1999, 11–12; cf. Shleifer and Treisman 2000; Mau and Starodubrovskaya 2001.

¹¹ Yeltsin 1994, 7–8; see also Gustafson 1999; Shleifer and Treisman 2004.

¹² Joseph Stiglitz notes that with hindsight it has been generally accepted that the gradualist position, that is the view that too fast an implementation of reform policies would lead to more, not less chaotic policy-making environment, has proved to be the right one. Stiglitz 2004, 197–198; on criticism towards transition narrative see Roberts 1964; Marquard 1991; Malia 1994; Laid 1998; Tsai 2006; Marciniak 2007. On the path metaphor in Russian political discourse see Baranov and Karaulov 1994. On the use of the 'time lag' argument in construing Russia's relations with Europe in current usage see e.g. Shmelev 2002.

¹³ Derluguian 2003; Freinkman 1998. On argumentation of weak state in Russia see e.g. Baev 1997; Hanson 2007; Hanson 2005; Popov 2007; Drzeniek 2007.

¹⁴ Shleifer and Treisman 2000, 6–7.

and rappel down boulders, and what techniques will enhance their chances of survival in the open”.¹⁵ Also, the authors argued that it was not enough to focus on the mountaineers’ “willpower, their integrity, and the climbing gear or cash international friends had supplied. One has to consider the shape of the mountains as well”.¹⁶ Without expecting any eventual transition from the tragic incompleteness to a state of completion this study seeks to ascertain the shape of mountains – Russia’s infrastructures.

For several years in a row, Russia’s gross domestic product (GDP) has been growing by 6 per cent annually. The foreign direct investments (FDI) to Russia have also been growing steadily, as well as the share of services and consumption from GDP. Thus, it can be said that, technically, Russia is at the end of the crisis. The problem, as formulated by President Putin’s former economic adviser, Andrei Illarionov, is that: “Human history has no precedent of a gap this wide between ‘territorial power’ and economic ‘significance’ remaining for any extended length of time”.¹⁷ What is suggested here is that one can not gauge a country’s strength on the basis of its resources. Rather, power is embedded in the practices and infrastructures, in the way in which the multiple, temporally coexistent layers of the space are “in order”.¹⁸ The relatively strong countries in this regard are those that have made “concerted efforts to frame policies in a comprehensive way”.¹⁹

This sense of order is precisely what was missing from Russian politics in the 1990s.²⁰ It is common place to characterize Russian politics during the 1990s with reference to notion of lack of order. In effect, it has appeared “notoriously inconsistent, contradictory and fluid”. As Klaus Segbers wrote in 1995:

The main operational modes for almost all FSU actors are *vzhivaniye* and *adaptatsiya* (surviving and adaptation), not design and influence. Beyond these immediate *concerns*, there is also a widespread lack of *intention* to organize politics as such, and to do something constructive at the nation-

¹⁵ Shleifer and Treisman 2000, 7.

¹⁶ Shleifer and Treisman 2000, 184.

¹⁷ Illarionov cited in Bovt and Korop 2003. Illarionov here echoes Max Weber’s famous definition of the state as a set of institutions that more or less successfully claims a “monopoly of legitimate violence in a specific territory”. Weber 1958, 77.

¹⁸ I follow here Hedley Bull’s definition of order as an arrangement or pattern that “is orderly in relation to some purpose”. Bull 1995, 3–5. See also Allen 2003; Werner and de Wilde 2001; Niemann 1998; Ruggie 1993, 148–149.

¹⁹ Lopex-Claros et al. 2006, 5.

²⁰ The system of governance in the 1990s was institutionally unstable because each successive budget which ran a deficit strengthened the ability of a few owners of major financial entities (oligarchs) to influence the authorities’ course of action. Mau 2001, 67; cf. Brown and Shevtsova 2001.

state level. So most post-Soviet elites act in a given context according to certain (but shifting) rules with the aim of positioning themselves in a fluid situation; they have no primary interest to build or shape a new world order or to resolve Balkan or demographic or ecological crises.²¹

That is, from the viewpoint of the dominant accounts of Western-European state-building, the transformation from *apparatchiks* to *enterpreurichiki* followed a logic that seemed irrational. However, in Russia, during and immediately following the collapse of the Soviet Union, it made sense for the Soviet bureaucrats, like enterprise directors, to “steal the state” since the main assets of wealth resided not within society (or were attainable by means of territorial conquests) but within the state.²²

In more recent discussions, this phenomenon has come to be known by many names from “crony capitalism” to “Russian-style capitalism”, and, latterly, “Russia Inc”. These conceptualizations point towards a paradoxical form of governance in Russia: the simultaneous underinstitutionalization and hyperinstitutionalization of the Russian state. Although the key issues, such as guarantees for investments and private property rights remain underinstitutionalized, the state aspires to hyperinstitutionalization – the control of all social and political activities.²³ Thus, the state agency in Russia appears not as a network of institutions (the rule of law, property rights, and democratic governance) but as an amorphous conglomerate of stakeholders. The above-mentioned conceptualizations of business-state relations in present-day Russia point to an asymmetry in state-business relations and a “fuzziness” in terms of the decision-making process itself. This is also reflected in the way the transport sector is organized.

In accordance with the Russian constitution, approved in 1993, foreign economic relations and federal transport belong exclusively to the sphere of the federal executive agencies.²⁴ However, in the course of the 1990s, the contours of what counted as a federal agency were often unclear, and the naming of something as an object of the ‘federal (transport) policy’ did not bring the envisioned results

²¹ Segbers 1995, 19.

²² Stoner-Weiss 2006, 33.

²³ Ruble 1995; Kulmala and Tekoniemi 2007. On lack of ‘trust’ in Russian politics and the shifting ‘rules of the game’ see also Yakovlev 2006; Gregory and Schrettl 2003; Baker and Glasser 2005; Oleinik 2005; Hanson 2006; Volkov 2002; Hanson and Teague 2005; Heusala 2005; Kordonskii 2006.

²⁴ In the transport sphere the main agencies include the Russian Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of railways established in 1990, the State Committee (e.g. on Tariffs), as well as federal services and agencies administering different modes of transport. Salischeva 2000, 91–105.

(for instance in terms of investments in infrastructure). The declaration of the intention to develop an ‘international transport corridor’ should, therefore, be assessed against the situational context of the reorganization of the federal agencies responsible for the transport sphere, and the changes in the ‘purposive order’ of the transport branch, its function in Russian politics and the economy at large.

A characteristic feature of Putin’s Russia, especially his second term in office, has been the elaboration of economic policies vis-à-vis the state’s ‘strategic interest’. As argued by Esther Kingston-Mann, “in contrast to economic theories that came to prevail in England and the United States, Russian economic thought was always rooted in the assumption that domestic security concerns were inextricably linked with rational economic decision-making”. Thus, instead of orienting towards the effectiveness of raising productivity rates, the feasibility of economic policies was judged in accordance with how it would contribute to the fostering of stability or disruption in society and state structures.²⁵ Instead of starting with the narrow definition of the rationality of economic action, actions oriented towards *economic ends*, as Max Weber put it, attention should be paid to how an action is framed, economically as well as politically, and what makes it appropriate given the specific set of underlying assumptions and envisioned goals. This research seeks to disclose the ways in which the questions which, initially, would seem to fall within the realm of economics, are framed as primarily political ones.²⁶

Difficulties in separating economics and politics are not, of course, unique to Russia. But in the context of Russia one is prompted to ask: What is this new Russia really about? Where does the Soviet way of doing things, characterized by unique economic logic, end and the new way of life begin? To answer these questions, I will examine a complicated network of similarities which overlap and criss-cross: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities in detail.²⁷ In the analytical sense, there is a comparison between the ‘background’, i.e. the ‘ways of doing things’ characteristic of the Soviet system, and the ‘foreground’, the new practices and institutions which have emerged since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

²⁵ Kingston-Mann 1999, 6–7; Rigby 1980, 19.

²⁶ Weber cited in Parsons 2003, 86; on the Weberian characterization of authority types and Soviet institutions Hanson 1997. On the need to broaden the conceptualization of rational action in International Political Economy (IPE) and International Relations (IR) studies see Carr 1964; Strange 1988; Strange 1996.

²⁷ Wittgenstein 1953, §66; see e.g. Aaltola 1999 for a similar approach.

The aim of this research is thus to reconstruct the logic in accordance with which the two layers merge into an assembly: into the practices and agencies constitutive of the new Russian polity. This allows us to see the ways in which the promise inherent in the slogan “New Road! New life! New Russia!” dissolves into emptiness, in the sense of simulacra²⁸, thus becoming a sign of incompleteness of Russia’s transformation, or alternatively, actualizing itself in deeds, namely practices and institutions that make travelling along the eastern edge of the European path fast, safe and reliable. The logic, as already mentioned, is the logic of argumentative discourse.

1.3 The constitution of the common economic space between Russia and the EU

Until recently it was plausible in the European Union (EU) to use the simple logic of stating that as Russia’s export infrastructure is directed towards Europe, it is in Russia’s interests to engage in cooperation with Europe.²⁹ Such optimism is rare these days and, conversely, oil and gas pipelines, ports and other transport-related infrastructures are seen as a means of furthering Russia’s state interests in Europe to the detriment of the latter. Just why infrastructure development has become a bone of contention in Russia’s relations with the EU needs scrutinizing.

The persistent and most likely continuing asymmetry in trade relations between Russia and the EU is among the most important factors contributing to differing views on the development of infrastructures. Approximately half of Russian foreign trade is destined for the EU, whereas Russia’s share in EU foreign trade is negligible.³⁰ When the Soviet Union became involved in the world economy in the 1970s, through oil and grain exports, it accounted for a minuscule 1.5 per cent of world trade right into the 1980s.³¹ After the collapse of the Soviet state, the gaping difference between world market prices, most importantly of oil and gas, and those of the domestic Soviet Union, and later Russia, made the trade liberalization into a lucrative business.³²

²⁸ Baudrillard 1983; Schoonmaker 1994.

²⁹ European Union 2004, 6.

³⁰ Sutela 2005, 10–12.

³¹ Kotkin 2001, 125.

³² See e.g. Shleifer and Treisman 2000; Gaddy and Ickes 2002; Medvedev 2000; Freeland 2005; Shevtsova 2005; Gustafson 1999; Herrera 2005; Kotkin 2001.

With the disintegration of the former Soviet bloc, the trade between the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEEC) and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) decreased considerably.³³ Subsequently, the pattern of trade between the CEEC and the EU (after 2004 the EU25) changed both qualitatively and quantitatively.³⁴ By 2020, trade between the EU25 and the CIS countries is expected to almost triple.³⁵ The major part of the trade between Russia and Europe currently passes through Russian ports in the Gulf of Finland. Even if the current constellation of the freight flows is not expected to change considerably in the foreseeable future, the estimated growth is one of the reasons why talks between the EU and Russia on trade facilitation, including the development of efficient 'transport corridors', have intensified.³⁶

A further factor that needs to be taken into consideration is that the majority of Russia's exports to the EU are transported via the pipeline crossing the countries 'in-between', whereas imports to Russia are mostly manufactured goods carried by trucks or by railway transport also through the 'corridor' countries.³⁷ Given the importance of energy exports for the Russian economy and the expected persistence of the asymmetry in the structure of the trade between Russia and the

³³ Ojala et al. 2004, 70–71, 148–149.

³⁴ Between 1991–1999 the exports of the CEEC to market economies (including exports to the EU area) almost tripled, increasing by 190%. CIS exports increased somewhat less rapidly, by 120% during the same period. A recent study that scrutinized changes in the quantity, variety and quality of exports shows that, in general, the CEEC have been more successful than the CIS countries in changing the pattern (product differentiation and product quality) of their trade flows. Kandogan (2006) concludes that this is partly a consequence of the liberalization agreements that forced the CEES to compete with market economies. Also the CEEC have received the largest FDIs accompanied by the technology transfer required to push through a qualitative change in their industry. The CIS customs union, on the other hand, lacks similar incentives since it does not encourage trade with market economies. Kandogan 2006, 216–217, 229.

³⁵ Lautso, Kari et al. 2005, 41.

³⁶ In 2003 Russia's energy exports to Europe amounted to 163 million tons (Mt) and other exports to 74 Mt. 54 per cent of other exports were transported via Russia's ports at the Gulf of Finland (incl. Kaliningrad), 36 per cent went through the Baltic ports, 5 per cent through Finland and another 5 per cent through Corridor 2 (From Russia via Belarus, Poland and Germany). In 2003, the imports from Europe to Russia totalled 26 Mt. The trade flows were distributed as follows: Russian ports (43%), Baltic ports (39%), Corridor 2 (11%) and Finland (7%). The general pattern of flows is not expected to change considerably by 2030. On the export side, the Baltic ports and Russian ports will remain the most significant pathways although the importance of Corridor 2 is expected to increase in the future. When it comes to imports, the share of Russian ports is expected to increase while, for example, transit through Finland is expected to decrease to 3 per cent from the current 7 per cent. The scenario is based upon TEN-STAC 2020 scenario and estimates that were formulated specifically to forecast changes in transit through Finland. Lautso et al. 2005, 39–44; see also e.g. Ollus and Simola 2006; Guseinov 2006; Baskakov 2006.

³⁷ Laurila 2002; Lautso et al. 2005; Pursiainen 2007.

EU, it might appear that I should actually focus on an energy dialogue between Russia and the EU rather than study the newly emergent transport dialogue fashioned after it. However simply focusing on the controversies over the energy dialogue is not enough. This is because in one way or another the question of the trade relations between Russia and the EU, and in a broader sense, the possibilities for dialogue, relate to the building of the infrastructures. The infrastructures provide, in a very concrete way, a 'common ground' for an interface between Russia and the EU. But there is nothing self-evident in the way in which the integration of the infrastructures proceeds.

The integration of infrastructures between Russia and the EU member states has been singled out as one of the main areas of partnership between Russia and the EU.³⁸ In the context of EU policies, the partnership is embodied in the concept of the 'pan-European transport corridor', and lately, the 'trans-European transport Axes'³⁹. The 'pan-European corridors' were introduced in the mid-1990s as a part of the forthcoming eastern enlargement of the EU. The innovative aspect of the notion is that, unlike previous infrastructure development in Europe, the creation of the 'pan-European corridors' was not defined in strictly national terms nor within the framework of a particular country's security needs. In the EU context, the corridors are seen as a means of reconfiguring Europe, integrating the new member states with the EU, and bridging the gap between the EU and its neighbours. The 'corridor' is, in fact, a loose framework for the harmonization of the rules and regulations that improve the compatibility of different transport systems, the coordination of the measures that help to reduce the 'transaction costs' along a specific route, and the facilitation of international and domestic investments in infrastructure objects identified as a part of the corridor. It thus envisages integration between previously isolated partners.

This research focuses on the process of the formulating Russia's response to the challenge of extending three out of the ten 'pan-European transport corridors' into

³⁸ European Union 1999, 7.

³⁹ The accession of new countries to the EU in 2004 led to a significant modification of the 'pan-European partnership' policy. The new member states were now eligible to acquire funding for their TEN network and therefore there was no longer a need for the special 'corridor' arrangement. In accordance with that, the corridors were regrouped into what is now called the 'trans-European transport Axes'. European Commission Directorate-General for Energy and Transport 2003; European Union 2003; see also European Parliament 1994; European Parliament 1996a.

the territory of Russia.⁴⁰ What this research into that ‘wondrous word “road”⁴¹ wants to achieve is an understanding of the patterns of reasoning by which the Russian transport infrastructures are conceptualized as a part of the ‘pan-European transport corridors’. I will examine the logic of the argumentation for a policy by which the Russian state agency envisions changing the “intransigent infrastructures”⁴² that comprised the backbone of the Soviet economic system and which are part of the framework of the economic reforms and the integration of Russia with the EU and the global markets. Thus, this study examines the way in which geography and politics are intertwined in the rebuilding (*obustroistvo*) of Russian polity. And how the vision of ‘all-European transport policy’, and in particular, the concept of ‘pan-European transport corridor’, was reinterpreted and reconceptualized in the context of Russia’s rebuilding.

Inherent in the formulation of the Russian position on the reordering of Europe’s transport networks is a tension between competition and cooperation in the sphere of transport. The development of transport corridors in Russia, argued the former Russian Minister of Transport Sergei Frank in 2003, has evolved:

From an idea of enlarging the system of Pan-European transport corridors into Russia to the development of our own system of international and domestic transport corridors, on the basis of which the main transport infrastructure projects will be realized.⁴³

In the above citation, Minister Frank suggests a shift from the concept of ‘pan-European corridors’ to the notion of ‘international transport corridors’ (*Mezhdunarodnyh Transportnyh Koridory, MTK*) on the basis of which the Russian policy on transport infrastructure modernization is actualized. I argue that the study of the logic of the reasoning behind the *shift* allows us to assess what the rebuilding of Russia is about and what it means for Russia-EU relations.

⁴⁰ The three corridors include corridor I (Helsinki – Tallinn – Riga – Kaunas – Warsaw), corridor II (Berlin – Warsaw – Minsk – Moscow), and corridor IX (Helsinki – St. Petersburg – Pskov/Moscow – Kiev – Ljubasevka – Chisinau – Bucharest – Dimitrovgrad – Alexandroupolis). The total length of the pan-European corridor network is about 48 000 km, of which 25 000 km are rail networks and 23 000 km are road networks. Airports, sea and river ports and major terminals serve as nodes between the modes, along these long-distance interconnections between the Central and Eastern European countries. Status of the Pan-European Corridors and Transport Areas (SPECTA) 2002, 7.

⁴¹ Gogol 1996, 222.

⁴² Collier 2004, 52.

⁴³ Frank 2003, 3. The same idea is expressed in the first official document that defines the priorities of the development of Russian international transport corridors. Government of the RF 2000.

From the viewpoint of assessing Russia's relations with the EU and, in particular, the creation of the Common Economic Space, the importance of the study lies in its exposition of the inherent tension between the use of the terms 'pan-European' and 'international' transport corridors in the context of Russian politics. Although the two terms are often used interchangeably, on closer inspection this is not the case. It is argued that the term 'international transport corridor' expresses something that cannot be simply prefigured by comparing the two terms, although the research starts from this premise. To trace that *something*, I will follow Wittgenstein's advice "to *look and see*"⁴⁴ whether the two terms have anything in common in Russia. Thus, the research task becomes one of reconstructing patterns of reasoning by which the use of the term suggested from abroad is "regularized and embedded in the practices and operations of the agencies".⁴⁵ In this way, examining the word "road" becomes synonymous with an analysis of the rebuilding (*obustroistvo*) of the state agency in Russia.

1.4 The razzmatazz features in Russian politics

Meta-theoretically, this study takes part in what is broadly referred to as constructivist theorizing.⁴⁶ The mode of constructivism adopted here derives from language philosopher John Searle's thesis on the construction of institutional reality.⁴⁷ The metaphor of construction is therefore taken quite literally, to suggest "that of building or assembling from parts"⁴⁸, as inscribed in the Russian word *postroenie*. The logic of construction is hierarchical and "presupposes the independence of positivities, in this instance words and world, about which

⁴⁴ Wittgenstein 1953, §66.

⁴⁵ Held et al. 1999, 19; Rorty 2006, 11.

⁴⁶ I acknowledge that the constructivist approach includes a wide array of different, also contradictory, epistemological positions and, consequently, methodological applications. Differences and similarities within constructivist literature have been discussed, for example, by Zehfuss, who has located differences between Wendt, Onuf and Katzenstein in their treatises on language; and by Rengger who discusses delineations between different types of constructivism from modernist to interpretive. Zehfuss 2001, 69; Rengger 2000; 80–81; Wendt 1995; Adler 1997; Checkel 1998; Hopf 1998; Guzzini 2000; Kratochwil 2000. On Constructivism and IR studies, see also Werner and de Wilde 2001; Price and Reus-Smith 1998; Kukla 2000; Hacking 1999; Guzzini 2000; Guzzini 2006; Koslowski and Kratochwil 1995; Zehfuss 2002; Checkel 1998.

⁴⁷ In IR studies, Searle's work has been applied, for example, by Nicholas Onuf, George Sorensen, John Ruggie and Stephen Krasner. Onuf 1989; Ruggie 1998; Kratochwil 1989.

⁴⁸ Hacking 1998, 55; Hacking 1999; Lodder 1983, 39.

questions of fit are being asked”.⁴⁹ A similar idea is conveyed in the prefix re- which, in the case of the *rebuilding* of the new spatio-political assemblage, does not indicate “an automatic repetition of inherited forms”. It refers to “the very thing that most requires explanation”, to borrow the words of Yosef Lapid, “to the attainment of the stability of ‘forms’”.⁵⁰ The stability of ‘forms’ constitutive of social reality is attained by way of an inter-subjective imposition of meaning on things and phenomena which, in this way, become part of that reality.

What distinguishes Searle’s account from other constructivist theorizing is that he puts emphasis on the deontic power vested in a thing or phenomenon in the act of meaning constitution (by way of collective intentionality). Accordingly, the collective imposition of meaning confers *new* power on a thing or phenomenon which it did not possess before. What is presupposed here is that the new imposition of meaning (e.g. the new status of ‘international transport corridor’) is an instance of ‘collective intentionality’ assigned to the phenomenon in question. I will return to this Searlean thesis in more detail in chapter 9, but for the moment I would like to point to the important presuppositions in this theoretical framework. The first concerns the distinction between intentions vis-à-vis beliefs and desires, while the second relates to the requirement of publicity at the instance of the collective imposition of meaning.

Intentions are action-oriented in the sense that they entail a commitment to action. We may *hold* beliefs and desires without them necessarily turning into action. This seems counter-intuitive especially from the viewpoint of rationalist choice theories where our actions are considered in terms of a choice between our desires and beliefs in a way deemed the most rational thing to do (from the viewpoint of utility). The paradox here is that deliberation between ends and means presupposes a deliberation between various possibilities and cannot therefore be subsumed only within the framework of a unique choice.⁵¹ What

⁴⁹ An important distinction in this respect is between epistemically objective and subjective as well as ontologically objective and subjective facts. Because a judgement ‘the US has denser road network than Russia’ does not depend on observers’ attitudes it is on epistemically objective. Whereas a judgement ‘railways are better than roads for freight transportation’ is epistemically subjective. In the ontological sense, objective and subjective “are predicates of entities and types of entities, and they ascribe modes of existence”. Accordingly, pains are ontologically subjective entities because their mode of existence depends of being felt by subjects. But mountains, in contrast, are ontologically objective because their mode of existence is independent of any perceiver or any mental sense. Searle 1995, xi–xii, 155; Onuf 1989, 94.

⁵⁰ Lapid 1996, 6; Hanson 2006, 127.

⁵¹ See chapter 9.4 for a more detailed discussion on the classical model of rationality. See also Mitzen 2007 for a good overview of the discussion on intentions.

then distinguishes beliefs and desires from intentions? The notion of intention introduces three qualities that are important with regard to considering institutions as sites of action. As already noted, intentions are action-oriented in the sense that they presuppose a *commitment* to action. The burden of proof resides in showing if the intention is consistent and coherent, that is, if the agency in question is *capable* of acting upon the deliberated goal.⁵²

This has a direct bearing upon this study. When posing questions about the deliberation on the ‘pan-European transport corridor’ in the Russian agentive context, I hope to establish when, in what agentive context, the imposition of the new status function ‘pan-European transport corridor’ entails a commitment of ‘acting together’ in the sense discussed above. The possible range of actions first identified in the Prague Declaration in 1991 is directed at harmonization of the technical and administrative rules of transport, the identification of existing bottlenecks and missing links at the pan-European level, and so forth.⁵³ On the other hand, the formulation of the concept of the ‘international transport corridor’ suggests that the process of deliberation in the Russian agentive context is guided by a set of complementary and perhaps conflicting intentions. The practical inference scheme that will be introduced later (see chapter 9.3) offers, in my view, a plausible way to distinguish between beliefs, desires and intentions in the reasoning of *what to do*.

In the above discussion it is presumed that, in one way or another, the intention to do something can be reconstructed by means of analysing the ‘act of speaking’: the interplay between the context of speaking and what is actually said. The central insight of speech act theory is that it shows how the *actualization of practices* – the process in which words are transformed into a lived realm – is tied to performative utterances. The word *actual* is meant to emphasize that the ‘existence’ of what is spoken does not simply consist of the fact that people talk in a certain way. The spoken words need to be applied as well. “What the ‘existence’ of whatever it is amounts to is expressed (shows itself) in the way people apply the language they speak”.⁵⁴ For example, the Prague Declaration referred to above is a public declaration of intent of the participants in the agreement and fulfils the criteria of serious speech acts defined by Austin. The ‘force’ of the agreement, however, is dependent upon its statutes being continuously and collectively recognized.

⁵² See again Mitzen 2007 for a useful summary. Cf. Tuomela 2002.

⁵³ Declaration 1991.

⁵⁴ Winch 1987, 113–114. See sections 8.2 and 8.3 for a discussion on speech act theory and its application in this study.

However, the idea of act, explains John Austin is “a fixed physical thing that we do” and as such it is distinguished from conventions and consequences. But the *speech act* by definition is ambiguous in both senses. The meaning (in the locutionary act) and the force (of the illocutionary act) are bound up with conventions of actions within a certain locution – “special circumstances of the occasion of the issuing of the utterance”.⁵⁵ The performance of an illocutionary act involves the securing of *uptake*: “the achieving of certain *effects* by saying something”. What the “using of words” entails, says Austin, is that “once we realize that what we have to study is *not* the sentence but the issuing of an utterance in a speech situation, one can’t help seeing that stating is performing an act”. Moreover, “the truth and falsity of a statement depends not merely on the meanings of words but on what act you were performing in what circumstances”.⁵⁶

In most situations, one can strongly sense which language usage is appropriate. For example, the illocutionary force of an utterance during the marriage ceremony is linked with a specific formula in accordance with which saying something translates into doing something (e.g. marrying). In more detail, Austin described conditions in terms of which saying something *under ordinary circumstances* counts as doing something. Most importantly, the speech act must follow an accepted conventional procedure, namely the person making the utterance must have the required authority, and the procedure has to be executed correctly and completely. Austin also defined a set of anomalies, abuses and slips which can result in the speech act not being performed properly.⁵⁷

Austin’s exclusion of ‘parasitic’ speech situations from further inquiry has been one of the main bones of contention surrounding speech act theory. Simply put, the question revolves around whether the illocutionary force is tied to its utterance origin (as Austin would have it) or to the conventional structure of language use (Derrida’s suggestion).⁵⁸ Although I run the risk of over-simplifying

⁵⁵ Austin 1965, 115.

⁵⁶ Austin 1965, 139–145; cf. Wendt 1995, 405; Butler 1997.

⁵⁷ Austin 1965, 15–17, 121, 100.

⁵⁸ Here I refer explicitly to the so-called Searle-Derrida debate in the late 1970s. Derrida argued that written communication must be repeatable even in the absolute absence of the receiver, and similarly after the absence (death) of the author. The margin between Searle and Derrida is rather narrow since Searle does separate the representing intention and the communication intention giving priority to the former. However, Derrida insists that the written sign (the text) can be detached from “the chain in which it is inserted” (and the intentionality of its author). Searle, on the other hand, argues that the explanation of the meaning of a text (serious or non-serious i.e. fiction) is linked first and foremost to the intentionality of the subject of an act of writing or speaking. Steven Winspur takes Derrida’s critique of Austin as his starting point and aims to establish the Wittgensteinian

a very complex issue, I would like to suggest that to reach an understanding of that ‘something’ which is characteristic of Russian politics, the use of the notion of the public domain should be considered in this context.

Russian politics is often described as suffering from the “Potemkin village syndrome”⁵⁹. ‘Potemkinization’, or ‘razzmatazz’, as it is called in this study, refers to the ‘administration’s use of major policy statements to convey an impression of unity and sincerity of purpose that was fundamentally at odds with the real – fragmented and opportunistic nature of a particular policy.⁶⁰ What this metaphor purports to say is that the policy statements form a *façade*, the main purpose of which is to hide the fact that there is, in effect, no policy at all. Politics acquires features of non-seriousness where the Kremlin ‘corridors of power’, when viewed through western eyes, start to look like a Hollywood movie set.⁶¹ Yet, I should add that neither is any other bureaucratic organization’s decision-making process, devoid of some razzmatazz features. However, the logic of ‘potemkinization’ in, say, the EU context is different from that in Russia. Nor am I suggesting that by peeling away the razzmatazz with this analysis, it will be possible to disclose the real politics hidden behind the façade.

On the contrary, the razzmatazz is helpful in understanding the Russian ‘potemkinization’ in a deeper sense which goes beyond the assumed duality of reality. For performatives that have features of razzmatazz are not necessarily irrational nor parasitic in the Austinian sense.⁶² The word razzmatazz refers to ‘razzle-dazzle’, showiness that is designed to be impressive and exciting especially in the context of a stage show or spectacle. It also means ‘double-talk’, a language that appears to be earnest and meaningful but which, in fact, is a mixture of sense and nonsense.⁶³ And thirdly, the term means “a complex manoeuvre (as

speech act theory which has at its core action and rule rather than speaking and thinking. His aim is to soften the presumption of consciousness-to-oneself in the act of speaking in Austin’s formulation of performatives. Searle 1975; Winspur 1989, 171; Searle 1998, 143–145; Derrida 2000; Tuomela later criticized Searle for dismissing conventions in his explanation of the construction of institutional reality, Tuomela 2002.

⁵⁹ Lo 2002, 67.

⁶⁰ Lo 2002, 67; see also Prozorov 2006a.

⁶¹ Viktor Pelevin in his famous book *Generation P* takes this point further, suggesting that Russian politics is simulacra, spectacle and invention that has no connection whatsoever to what is ‘real’. Pelevin 2000.

⁶² Austin 1965, 22.

⁶³ The idea of double-talk was a ubiquitous feature of Soviet politics where ideological literacy increasingly came to be seen as a technical skill. Discourse consisted of prefabricated “blocks” with predetermined and context-independent “literal meanings”. Alexei Yurchak argues in his study on the last Soviet generation that in the process “official Party speeches and documents became subject to increasingly meticulous and publicly invisible editing

in sports) designed to confuse an opponent”.⁶⁴ This applies, of course, to social phenomena in general. We don’t always explain ourselves to others in an accessible way and tend to make moves that often make no sense at all. However, I am not referring here to those numerous ways in which our intentions may go awry, but rather to the *phenomenon* of razzmatazz in Russian politics. Searle explains this phenomenon as follows:

Where the institution demands more of its participants than it can extract by force, where consent is essential, a great deal of pomp, ceremony, and razzmatazz is used in such a way as to suggest that something more is going on than simply acceptance of the formula X counts as Y in C.⁶⁵

The “something more” suggested by Searle is an acceptance of the power that some people exert over others by virtue of having been collectively granted that status. The ‘ceremony’ in this case is understood as a reminder of the fact that there is continued acceptance of the authority, and with it, the deontic power to do things and rule over others. However, in this connection Searle hints at the currently ongoing “erosion of acceptance of large institutional structures around the world”.⁶⁶ But in his account, the ‘razzmatazz’ is part of the explanation of the mechanism of institutionalization, not its erosion. What I would like to suggest is a reconsideration of the place of ‘razzmatazz’ in our interpretations of Russian politics.

In the Soviet context, and subsequently in Russia, ‘razzmatazz’ in politics refers to practices where “words, gestures and pictures have their symbolic meanings and the ritual itself means accomplishing something”. Susiluoto writes: “When something was solemnly planned, commanded or shouted (*davai, davai*) it was already as if achieved”.⁶⁷ Eduard Uspenskii describes this phenomenon in his children’s book *Krokodil Gena and His Friends*. The rationale during the Soviet era, as the administrator *Ivan Ivanovitsh* in Uspenskii’s narrative says, was to complete the task only ‘halfway’, but the official ideology represented this

with the goal of producing texts without ‘a single step sideways from the norm’’. Yurchak 2003, 489–490.

⁶⁴ See e.g. Meriam-Webster’s Online Dictionary (entry razzle-dazzle and double-talk) URL: <http://www.m-w.com/dictionary/razzmatazz>. See also Wikipedia where razzmatazz is described as meaning “ambiguous language”. URL: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Razzmatazz>.

⁶⁵ Searle 1995, 118.

⁶⁶ Searle 1995, 118.

⁶⁷ Susiluoto 1990, 79; Yurchak 2006; cf. Lane 1981 and also chapter 15 below.

‘halfway act’ as if the task had been completed in full.⁶⁸ In the official ideology that saw the ‘brighter tomorrow’ as a task to be *fulfilled*, there was no place for the recognition of the actual systemic deficiencies characteristic of the command economy. Consequently, by the late Soviet period, the slogan ‘a brighter tomorrow’ had drained the present of meaning and transformed the Russian language into clichéd nonsense “filled with meaningless expressions often naming non-existent phenomena”.⁶⁹ The collapse of the system became evident when the mutual agreement to count ‘void’ performatives as effective ones eroded and the actual *capacity* of the state authorities to accomplish what was deemed necessary was publicly questioned.

The performance of public rituals, such as the opening ceremonies of large construction projects had, however, a pragmatic function as well. In the Soviet economic environment the feasibility of the project was not easily convertible to the cost-effectiveness calculations (used in decision-making in the market economies) but, instead, rested on its status in the overall Plan. Therefore, a symbolic confirmation of a “no-nonsense attitude” towards a construction project by the highest authorities was required for its completion.⁷⁰ In the years following the collapse of the command economy, the ‘opening ceremonies’ and other forms of *razzmatazz* did not disappear, but their meaning was substantially changed.

In the current economic environment, the ‘opening ceremonies’ are sites of policy-making where the formal, informal and unwritten rules of the game take shape and are shaped. Consequently, even if the *razzmatazz* often has features of non-seriousness, we should regard it as a form of playfulness whereby formal rules of the game are subverted in the playing according to the informal ones. Why then this lengthy description of the *razzmatazz* phenomenon if, in the end, I dismiss it as playfulness in the act of policy-making?

Consider the point in terms of an analogy between building and designing a house. Much of sociological and social science theory considers the causal relation between ideas (the design of a house) and the material realities constraining the

⁶⁸ Uspenskii 2002, 173–177; Laitinen 1983, 13; Freinkman 1998.

⁶⁹ The Soviet alternative literature, e.g. Erofeev’s *Moskva-Petushki* and Platonov’s *Kotlovan* (the Foundation Pit) played with and exposed to critical scrutiny the *razzmatazz* of the official discourse. On the Soviet dream as a catastrophe see e.g. Erofeev 1994; Platonov 1973; Stites 1989; Buck-Morss 2002a; Yurchak 2003; Yurchak 2006. For a discussion on Erofeev’s novel see Martin 1997; Beraha 1997, and on Platonov, Brodsky 1973.

⁷⁰ In the case of a construction project, doing the groundwork was only the starting point, although a crucial one in terms of the actual completion of the building. Continuation of the building work required that the site was included in the priority list of start-up facilities in accordance with which scarce resources and funding were distributed. Neshchadin 1995, 88–89; Freinkman 1998, 187.

building process. Those advocating the prioritizing of ideas over material reality would put emphasis on architectural plans “exerting a ‘controlling’ influence over the less symbolic, more material ingredients required to build the house”. However, those whom Ann Swindler calls “practice theorists” would pay attention to the inevitable incompleteness of the plan as such, and the constraints on the design stemming from the properties of the building material available as well as the skill of the builders in fulfilling what is designed.⁷¹ In this work I am interested in the actual processes whereby the “materials available” – i.e. already existing institutional forms – are transformed in practical action.

Searle is among those theorists who seek to explain the ‘fit’ between the symbolic, ideational realm and the material sphere of the world. Even if the mechanism of the construction of institutional reality developed by Searle is applied in this study, the basic point of departure is to acknowledge the embedded and incomplete features of that link and our explanations for it. In the Searlean sense of the term, *razmatazz* may refer, for example, to an event where the designers of the house (the architect, investors and the head engineer of the project) and the workers jointly celebrate the completion of the building process. During the ceremony, speeches are given to honour the workers and acknowledge the importance of the investment (for an enterprise, a town, a nation, etc.).

During the Soviet years, however, the ceremonial opening of the large construction projects often took place *before* the building was actually completed. The pace of the building process was tied to the calendar of political events (for example, the anniversary of the October Revolution) rather than the course of the building process itself.⁷² This speaks for the importance of *seeing* a particular action against its situational context and through the interpretation of the inter-textual context. In order to ascertain the appropriateness of the language used, we should proceed by reconstructing the patterns of reasoning in a context in which certain actions make sense.⁷³ The following chapter introduces the concept of the transport corridor. I will discuss the situational context in which the idea of the ‘pan-European transport corridor’ evolved in the EU and look into the use of the word ‘corridor’ in the context of Russian politics. The chapter begins with a narrative about an opening ceremony of Chita-Khabarovsk road that will allow me to elaborate on the construction of institutional facts.

⁷¹ Swindler 2001, 80.

⁷² It should be added to this that the large construction projects during the Soviet years and after were tightly knit with the second economy. In this context, prolonging the construction work was in the interests of all beneficiaries of the building process.

⁷³ Von Wright 1983, 42; Neumann 2002.

2 A journey along the eastern edge of the European path

2.1 The ceremonial opening of the “international transport corridor East-West”

The ceremonial opening of the *through traffic* (*skovznoĝo proezda*) on the federal road section between Chita and Khabarovsk in February 2004 was a celebration of not just any road, but the completion of the highway (*magistral*) that would create the first uninterrupted passage through the whole of Russia. To emphasize Russia’s self-identification as the geographical *interface*⁷⁴ between Europe and Asia, the official proclamations characterized the road as an *international transport corridor East-West*. The building of a new road section was important, not just for the purposes of the country’s international economic competitiveness or internal coherence, but also because in Russia’s Transport Strategy “increasing individual mobility” is recognized as a “constitutional right” of every citizen and a “symbol of a new form of life (*obrazo zhizni*) emerging in Russia”.⁷⁵

The exclamation marks in the slogan: “New Road! New Life! New Russia!” also convey an important point about the approach of this study: language understood as a medium of action.⁷⁶ An exclamation mark in a text carries with it a trace of the type of force communicated in an act of speaking. It may signify a command (Build the road!), but it may also indicate an actual exclamation (A new road, wow!) or that a sentence is intended to be astonishing in some way (The road was actually built, finally!). What is important in this study is that the trace of a command in the exclamation mark hints at the emergence of power in an act of speaking.⁷⁷

Things that can be done by uttering words are of a special type. “Build a road!” said by an authorized person in the right situation may result in the road actually being completed one day. But in between there are all kinds of intermediate steps; directions authorizing financing from the regional or federal budget, tender

⁷⁴ Frank 2000.

⁷⁵ Mintrans 2003d. See Constitution of the RF Chapter 2, Articles 19 and 27.

⁷⁶ Austin 1965; Searle 1970; Von Wright 1971; Martin 1976; Healey 1993; Fischer 1993. On speech act theory and IR studies see e.g. Guzzini 2006; Krebs and Jackson 2007; Fierke 2002.

⁷⁷ Austin 1965.

procedures in accordance with international practices, the selection of contractors, the authorization for the purchase of modern equipment, and so on. Even if the central aspects of institutional reality exist because of the performative force of language use, it is equally clear that much more is required than just words spoken in the right way in the right circumstances. This is not to say that decision-makers do not count, but merely to point out that authority demands more than an ability to command. It is also about the ability to carry out what was intended to be done. The opening ceremony described briefly below will illustrate the research analytical approach and concepts applied in the study.

The opening ceremony in question took place in the city of Khabarovsk, the capital of the Khabarovsk region.⁷⁸ It was late February 2004 and the road was effectively concealed beneath packed snow. Present at the ceremony was President Putin together with other high-level officials from Moscow. While the regional media was understandably awash with reports of the event and the president's visit, the news about the opening of the new road was welcomed with excitement and pride in Moscow as well.⁷⁹ The Rossiya TV channel showed a special news clip dedicated to the opening, where it stated that:

“Amur” (the official name of the federal highway) is not just a road from point “A”, Chita, to point “B”, Khabarovsk. Now, one may drive by car along this route from Moscow to Vladivostok. It is the longest road in the world; ten thousand kilometres long – people living in the Far East of Russia have dubbed it nothing less than automobile Transsib.⁸⁰

The head of the Duma's committee on Energy, Transport and Communications, V.A. Yazev, echoed what soon became the mainstream interpretation of the significance of the event. In his congratulatory telegram to Transport Minister Frank, he announced that:

This wonderful event doesn't just open a direct road link between Moscow and Vladivostok. It is linked to the development of the regional economies in Siberia and the Far East, and the securing of Russia's security interests. I am sure that this event will contribute to new progress in the transport sphere in general.⁸¹

⁷⁸ The distance between Moscow and Khabarovsk is more than 6000 kilometres and the distance between Khabarovsk and Vladivostok is about 300 kilometres.

⁷⁹ In the media, the opening ceremony was compared to the opening of the trans-Siberian railway in 1903. Mintrans 2004b; Vesti 26.2.2004; Kommersant 27.2.2004; Regionalnaya Sluzhba Novostei 27.2.2004.

⁸⁰ Telekanal “Rossiya” Vesti 26.2.2004 14:58 MSK.

⁸¹ Government of the RF 2004a.

What the text declined to say explicitly was that until the completion of this road section, there was no direct, all-year-round road linkage between European Russia and the Far East.⁸² The usage of the word ‘completion’ in this connection proved to be an exaggeration. Lengthy sections of the route were unfinished and travelling along it was only possible by heavy truck or bulldozer rather than by car.⁸³ So what was opened in that case, if not a new road and a bridge?⁸⁴

As written in the aforementioned telegram to Minister Frank, the ceremony was organized for the opening of *through traffic* on the Chita–Khabarovsk road, and not just between Chita and Khabarovsk but along the whole distance of 12 thousand kilometres from Paris, Berlin, and Moscow to Vladivostok. The acting Minister of Transport, Sergei Frank, confirmed to journalists that the road was really part of the Paris–Vladivostok road. “Yes”, replied Frank to a journalist’s question, “and no one has a choice, neither the French nor us. Today we have one road. And it already has traffic.” “Through traffic?” asked the journalist. “Only through traffic, yes. But we will continue the construction work”.⁸⁵ After the red, white and blue ribbon was ceremonially cut by one of the road construction workers, the governor of the Khabarovsk region, Viktor Ishaev, uttered: “And now, through traffic is opened. Soon the Far East will become closer!” (*i skoro Dal’nii Vostok stanet blizhnim*). After Ishaev’s ambiguous declaration, a convoy of trucks drove to the bridge with placards placed on the roof of each truck on which was written: “New Road! New Life! New Russia!”⁸⁶

⁸² For over 30 years the Chita-Khabarovsk project had carried the infamous status of *dolgostroi*. The project was approved by the Soviet government on July 13, 1966 and it was scheduled to be ready by 1980. The actual construction work started in 1978, and up to January 2003 1224 kilometres out of the total 2165 km were built, of which approximately 600 kilometres had an asphalt-concrete surface. During the Soviet period, construction work proceeded at a “socialist tempo”. Between 1978 and 1995, only 35 kilometres of road were built per year (the sections in the vicinity of the cities of Chita, Blagoveshensk and Khabarovsk) whilst during the last half year (between autumn 2003 until January 2004) the work progressed one kilometre per day. During the Soviet period, the construction work was led by the military brigades and effectively hampered after the Afghan war started. Even now, however, parts of the road construction are carried out by the military. The project is famous for being a black hole for federal funds. Observers estimate that over 40 billion roubles (1.3 bn dollars) have been spent on the road since 1978 (at 2003 rates). Rossiiskaya Gazeta 3.6.2003; Rossiiskaya Gazeta 26.1.2004; RRR 31.8.2004.

⁸³ The head of the Russian Road Agency (Rosavtodor), Igor Slunayev, confirmed this in an interview for the Russian radio station Mayak. Radio Mayak 1.3.2005 16:23 MSK.

⁸⁴ The opening of the road also entailed the opening of a new bridge in the city of Khabarovsk.

⁸⁵ Kolesnikov 2005, 343–345.

⁸⁶ Kommersant 27.2.2004; Kolesnikov 2005, 346.

The performative speech act “through traffic is (hereby) opened” fulfils the procedural conditions for happy performatives defined by Austin.⁸⁷ It is not a simple statement describing that “the through traffic is opened” since it is uttered on the occasion of the *opening ceremony* with due regard to an accepted procedure and performed by an authorized person. The formal authorization for the opening derives from a decision signed by the Head of the Federal Road Agency, Igor Sljunjajev.⁸⁸ But it begs the question of whether this ceremonial act, performed in the presence of President Putin and other high-level officials from Moscow, was necessary since the aforementioned decision had already authorized the opening of the road.

The notion of *Skvoznogo proezda* does not have any special technical connotations related to road engineering in particular. The adjective *skvoznoi* is often used with the words traffic (*dvizhenie*), train (*poezd*) and route (*marshrut*), and it stands for the “accomplishment of movement between two points without change of carriage or route”.⁸⁹ By insisting on the opening of *through traffic*, Ishaev and the other authorities were, in fact, referring to something beyond the practical functioning of the road. The use of the phrase in this connection was an expression of political will to connect Siberia and the Russian Far East with the heartland of Russia. The *razzmatazz* was also required because the federal authorities were behaving *as if* the opening of the through traffic on the Chita–Khabarovsk road marked further confirmation of the “opening of the *international (road) transport corridor ‘East-West’*”. This was to underline for those regional authorities in the Far East dreaming of international transport corridors on their own territory that there was only *one* ‘international transport corridor’ between Kaliningrad and Vladivostok/Nahodka. Later in June 2004 the new Minister of Transport, Igor Levitin, explained that:

The international transport corridor “East-West”, to which Transsib and the Kaliningrad–Vladivostok road belong, is already functioning; and within the next five years the whole length of the road will have a hard surface. The fact that only those road sections from the westernmost border of Russia

⁸⁷ Austin 1965, 60–61.

⁸⁸ Earlier that same year, a special commission had travelled from Chita to Khabarovsk and, based on their estimations, the opening of traffic on the road section got the green light. AvtoTransInfo 2004.

⁸⁹ Kuznetsov 2001, 1194. Other uses of the word *skvoznoi* also refer to the movement through a space, be it a wind blowing through the courtyard or a two-way entrance from the courtyard.

as far as Nizhniy Novgorod comply with international requirements is another matter.⁹⁰

It is of course obvious that merely ‘opening’ the new road between Chita and Khabarovsk does not yet make the corridor real. But insisting that what was opened was not just a road section but potentially an ‘international transport corridor “East-West”’ takes it one step further toward its completion. This is because the imposition of the new status function ‘international transport corridor’ is a kind of *currency* – a code word that may help to draw foreign direct investments (FDI) as well as domestic (budget) resources to that particular route project. Given that the use of the new status function will be followed by authoritative actions, a corridor is established ‘as a matter of fact’. It becomes an institutional fact.

The logical structure of institutional facts, such as money, sovereignty, or hypothetically, a transport corridor, is built upon the presumption of ‘some-thing’; an object or phenomenon which, by the (collective) assignment of a new status function, is situated within a larger network of meaning, and which, following on from this, may acquire a durable ‘thing-ness’, thereby becoming an institutional fact. Institutional facts are a special subclass of social facts for they imply further consequences.⁹¹ The mechanism of the construction of institutional facts is expressed in Searle’s formula ‘X counts as Y in C’. The ‘count as’ locution names the feature of the imposition of a status to which a function is attached by way of collective intentionality.⁹² The central condition for functional attributes assigned according to the formula is as follows. First, ‘whenever the function⁹³ of X is to Y, X and Y are parts of a *system* where the system is, in part, defined by *purposes, goals, and values generally*’. And second, ‘whenever the function of X is to Y, then X is *supposed* to cause or otherwise result in Y’. In the simplest case, the Y term names a power that the X term does not have solely by virtue of its X structure.⁹⁴

“We can with this mechanism”, Searle explains “create all and only those forms of power where the collective recognition or acceptance of the power is

⁹⁰ Itogi 30.6.2004; cf. Radio Mayak 10.7.2005.

⁹¹ Searle 1995, 38, 88–89.

⁹² Searle 1995, 27–56, 153, 190–194.

⁹³ Searle’s conceptualization of function is not without its problems, as has been noted for example by Tuomela. According to Tuomela, its central problem is that Searle’s thesis requires that every institution, in order to be an institution, needs to have a function that is collectively and continuously accepted. What Tuomela especially criticizes is Searle’s failure to distinguish adequately between the function of the term describing the institution and the function of the institution. Tuomela 1996, 118. See also Tuomela 2002.

⁹⁴ Searle 1995, 19. Emphasis in original; Searle 1995, 96.

constitutive of having it”.⁹⁵ The collective intentionality is omnipresent, in every detail of institutional *f-acts* and yet this pervasive feature of such facts is not necessary but *contingent*.

The paradox [of self-referentiality of institutional facts] dissolves when we see that thinking *x* is *f* in the case of social facts is only part of the constitution of the fact that *x* is *f*, and the concept expressed by *f* in all of these cases is simply a way of clustering a whole family of social practices. For social concepts, thinking that *x* is *f* involves thinking that whole patterns of behaviour and social relationships are *appropriate* to the phenomenon in question. So, thinking that something is money or property or a party is not just a matter of thinking that certain labels apply but, rather, thinking that a *set of attitudes and behaviour are appropriate to the situation in its social context*. But then, thinking that those attitudes are appropriate is itself partly constitutive of that social situation.⁹⁶

In this study, the formula ‘X counts as Y in C’ provides the analytical logic to reconstruct the argumentation for the Russian government policy on international transport corridors. What I seek to disclose is the logic of the ‘constitution’ of the ‘pan-European’/‘international’ transport corridor, and further, the rearrangement of the Russian polity. It should be emphasized that the “causality” of the constitution of the institutional fact ‘corridor’ is contingent: it is rhetorical rather than logical. The link between the imposition of authority (we accept (S has authority)) and action (S does A) is possible but not necessarily binding. Contingency is both a feature of Russian politics and refers to the way in which formal, informal and unwritten rules converge in an instance of policy-making. I will return to this issue in chapter 9. Next I will elaborate on the background to the research questions, and after that define the puzzle that the research purports to answer, as well as the organization of the study.

⁹⁵ Searle 1995, 96. Searle’s thesis on the construction of institutional reality builds upon a presumption of others as potential members of a cooperative activity, where the sense of community is innate in humans as “a biologically primitive sense of the other person as a candidate for shared intentionality”. The structure of intentionality matches the thing explained because intentions have the world-to-mind direction of fit, which means that the aim of the intention is not to represent how things are, but rather to bring about changes in the world so that the world matches the content of the intention. The logical operation of intentionality imposed is as follows: We accept (S has power (S does A)). It is important to note that in the Searlean analysis, collective acceptance (we-intentionality) works causally in producing conditions for S to have authority to perform a certain act A. Searle 1998, 105; Searle 1995, 111.

⁹⁶ Searle 1998, 137. Emphasis added.

2.2 Background to the research question: the reshaping of Europe

2.2.1 *The restructuring of Europe's infrastructures*

The creative destruction of the early 1990s radically transformed the context of transport infrastructure development in Europe. As the Russian state continued to exercise its control (with certain qualifications) over the oil and gas pipelines as well as the electricity network, some of the major infrastructure facilities on the western flank of the country were lost. In other words, the major port complexes on the Baltic Sea, the airports and border-crossing facilities, as well as other infrastructure objects built during the Soviet years were 'dislocated' into the territory of the neighbouring countries. Also, some of the major route linkages to the west from Moscow (to Kaliningrad through Lithuania) or Northern Caucasus (through the territory of Ukraine) and from Southern Russia to Siberia (through the territory of Kazakhstan) suddenly became 'extra-territorial' meaning that the routes linking two parts of Russia actually crossed through the neighbouring country.⁹⁷

At the same time as the post-Soviet space was becoming fragmented, the idea of a durable, common space that both the western and the eastern sides of the continent could share was envisioned, starting with the Charter for a New Europe signed in 1990 in Paris. The first steps towards the institutionalization of the transport network development as a part of the European-wide integration were taken in the early 1980s in conjunction with the idea of a single market within the European Community (EC), and in the framework of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN/ECE).⁹⁸ The first Pan-European transport conference held in Prague in October 1991 was something of a turning point in that it was the occasion of the first official announcement about the need to formulate a common understanding on an 'all-European Transport Policy'. The declaration called for an identification of "the most important major transport

⁹⁷ Westwood 2002.

⁹⁸ The evolution of transport policy in the EU goes beyond the confines of this study. I will only mention briefly that until the early 1980s the development of the transport infrastructure had remained the responsibility of the member states of the European Community. After 1982, the Community started to allocate special subsidies for transport infrastructure development. The Maastricht Treaty introduced the concept of the trans-European network and with it the EU's involvement in infrastructure policy was changed from a mere objective pursued through other activities to a responsibility conferred directly upon it. European Communities 1993; European Parliament Directorate-General for Research 1997, 9–12.

routes linking the European countries and regions”. This was intended as a “formal and concrete expression” of the need to engage in building a transport infrastructure network for the new Europe.⁹⁹

The creation of the nine ‘pan-European transport corridors’ was not only a symbolic but also a practical embodiment of this thought. The prioritization of the nine ‘pan-European transport corridors’ in 1994 was an act aimed at fostering a new spatial as well as temporal order for the enlarged Europe. The new status – the ‘pan-European transport corridor’ – was the formal expression of a new order inasmuch as the set of road and rail connections, border-crossing points, sea ports, airports and the like were in purposive relation to each other. But, as the Director General for Transport, R. Coleman, emphasized: “The map [of the pan-European corridors] has no binding authority, much less any magic power. Its real value lies in it defining the priorities which are shared by the countries concerned so that they can focus their efforts, technical and financial, on the developments which are in their common interest”.¹⁰⁰ During the subsequent ten-year time period, the EU policy on eastern enlargement provided a frame in terms of which it was plausible for the European Commission to commit the EU to financing the development of the pan-European corridors within the territory of the new member states. The extension of three of the nine corridors (IX, I, II) to the territory of Russia initially, at least, engaged Russia to participate in this process.¹⁰¹

The *Partnership and Co-operation Agreement* between Russia and the EU was signed in 1994, but didn’t come into force until December 1997, due to the first Chechen war. The agreement established a blueprint for the way in which the development of the communication networks between Russia and the EU should proceed. The parties agreed that the co-operation should focus on: “Restructuring and modernizing transport systems and networks in Russia (...) including the modernization of major routes of common interest and the trans-European links (...)”¹⁰². Two years later, in the *Common Strategy of the EU on Russia*, the development of the “all-European co-operation infrastructure” was

⁹⁹ Declaration 1991. The opening of the rail freight market on 1 January 2007 marked an important step in the liberalization of the rail service markets in Europe. Eisenkopf 2006.

¹⁰⁰ European Parliament 1997b.

¹⁰¹ Pan-European transport corridor IX consists of transport connections between Helsinki, Finland and the Greek town of Alexandroupolis. In my study I have focused on the branch (A) that, by definition, connects Helsinki with St. Petersburg and Moscow.

¹⁰² Agreement 1997, article 70.

defined as one of the “common challenges on the European continent”.¹⁰³ Thus, it was declared that the EU would co-operate with Russia in: “exploring the scope for working towards linking the Russian transportation systems (road and rail) with the trans-European corridors and by seeking mutually satisfactory ways to address transport issues”.¹⁰⁴ The objective to create *Four Common Spaces*, drafted in the EU-Russia summit in St. Petersburg in May 2003, is the latest variant on efforts to frame Russia–EU relations into a specific policy space. In this connection, reference is made to the “priority corridors of mutual interest” rather than the ‘pan-European corridors’, a shift that reflects changes both in the EU and in Russian policies on the development of the transport infrastructures.¹⁰⁵

As mentioned above, this research deals with Russia’s response to the introduction of a policy on the development of ‘pan-European transport corridors’ and the creation of a shared Europe. Response is understood as something dynamic, an instance that (potentially at least) brought the infrastructures into the realm of politics anew. In the following section I will briefly elaborate on the different ways in which the term ‘corridor’ was used in the context of Russian politics in the 1990s. The chapter also presents a short introduction to the idea of corridors in terms of the disciplinary discussions of international relations.

2.2.2 *The concept of the transport corridor*

In the expert discourse dealing with transport, the ‘transport chain’ or ‘value chain’ concepts imply similar arrangements to that of the ‘corridor’. In a recent study by Alf Brodin, for example, a ‘transport chain’ is defined as “the routing of transport used for the transport of a consignment by a cargo owner”. The “transport corridor”, according to the definition derived from this conceptualization is the “result of a concentration of transport chains to certain corridors”. Moreover, it is noted that “larger corridors originate/terminate in transport generating/absorbing points that are relatively limited in number”.¹⁰⁶ In the UN framework, the corridor arrangements are defined as “a set of rules governing all aspects of

¹⁰³ European Union 1999, 7.

¹⁰⁴ European Union 1999, 7.

¹⁰⁵ European Union 2005. On Common Economic Space and EU–Russia relations see e.g. Sutela 2005; Emerson 2006; Barysch 2006.

¹⁰⁶ Brodin 2001, 26.

transport and transit of goods throughout a given route (corridor), backed by a treaty signed by all participating countries”.¹⁰⁷

Deriving from the above characterizations, it should be noted that this study deals with the domain of politics that confines the existence and operation of the corridors. In this definition, the term *transport corridor* denotes a set of practices and infrastructures that help reinforce proximity rather than remoteness, and that create a sense of presence instead of absence. Transport corridors are *ordered arrangements of space* that are aimed at changing the tempo (and often also the direction) of movement in space. As institutional arrangements, they impose a certain rhythm and synchrony on movement. But unlike a musical tempo, which is ontologically subjective, the rhythm that corridor arrangements inflict upon practices of movement is epistemically objective. The corridor is the very metronome that constitutes what is counted as *allegro* or *adagio* in a specific environment. The use of the term ‘corridor’ in policy-making in some sense creates, maintains but may also change a system of rules and regulations in accordance with which infrastructures (roads, railways, ports and warehouses) are orderly in relation to a specific purpose. For example, counting 16 thousand kilometres of Russian roads as part of the ‘Trans-European Network’ ‘E’ obligates (in principle) the Russian authorities to bring these road sections into conformity with international requirements.¹⁰⁸

In terms of the disciplinary discussions of international relations, *transport corridors* are a form of interface between the ‘internal’ and the ‘external’, the domestic and international spheres of politics. The practices of international (transit) transportation are a realm of politics where the “logic of homogeneity” (a striving for sameness and “like units”) and the “logic of heterogeneity” (the preservation of “unlike” features of the domestic realm) are actualized in the reasoning behind specific policies or particular actions and practices.¹⁰⁹ Infrastructure modernization is generally regarded as one of the drivers of homogenization. At its core is a competitive logic that strives towards sameness and draws all, as Karl Marx put it, “even the most barbarian nations into civilization”.¹¹⁰ However, another interpretation of Marx challenges this view and

¹⁰⁷ Global Facilitation Partnership for Transportation and Trade.

¹⁰⁸ It has been estimated that out of 16 thousand km, over 10 thousand km of roads require reconstruction and approximately 80 per cent of the bridges along the ‘E roads’ do not meet the standards required. Radov 2005.

¹⁰⁹ I follow Sorensen’s formulation of the interface between international/domestic and the logic of homogeneity and heterogeneity. Sorensen 2001, 12–35.

¹¹⁰ Marx in the Communist Manifesto. Cited in Sorensen 2001, 27.

argues instead that even capitalist development does not create the “world after its own image”, but rather a kaleidoscope of images, each befitting a particular place and time.¹¹¹ The logic of heterogeneity comes to the fore in the institutional setting whereby the economic, political and social realms interact.

Russia’s “road to maturity”¹¹² did not create a system that would be just like any other. But this does not mean that the “Russian system”¹¹³ would be beyond any comparison. In this study the development of the ‘pan-European corridors’ provides a heuristic starting point from which to reflect on Russia’s development strategies vis-à-vis transport infrastructure modernization. In this way, the research problematique is linked to the dynamic of transport policies in the EU, even if the focus of the study is on the Russian policies on the transport corridors. The etymology of the word corridor and the use of the term in the Russian public discussion exemplifies the way in which infrastructures become a realm of politics.

The word corridor can be traced back to the Italian word *corridore*, meaning gallery and the Latin word *currere* (current, to run). It was originally used of fortifications with the meaning of long hallway and first appeared in 1814. In this sense the word corridor refers to a durable arrangement that is designed *to enable movement through space*. The word did not appear in Soviet dictionaries possibly because there was nothing extraordinary about its use. In the new explanatory dictionary of Russian language published in 2001 the word is defined as follows:

1. Long passage that links parts of a building, premises, and an apartment.
2. Long, narrow space, passage (*prohod, proezd*), confined (*ogranichennie*) on both sides.¹¹⁴

The first definition refers to a long narrow passage (*proezd*) that is located inside a building or an apartment. In this basic sense the ‘corridor’ is a space in between, the purpose of which is to connect different parts of a building or rooms in an apartment. The second definition is more abstract, explicating the specific form of the corridor, not its content. An example given in the Russian Explanatory

¹¹¹ See discussion on the logic of heterogeneity versus homogeneity in Sorensen 2001, 25–35.

¹¹² The process of modernization explicated by Walt Rostow includes expressions ranging from traditional society and pre-take-off stage and take-off, to the road to maturity, culminating in the modern mass consumption society. Cited in Sorensen 2001, 29. See discussion on Rostow’s model in Roberts 1964 and Isaak 1991.

¹¹³ See e.g. Karppinen 2006.

¹¹⁴ Kuznetsov 2001, 457.

Dictionary refers to *vozdushnyi koridor* – air (transport) corridor.¹¹⁵ This is actually one of the most frequently occurring uses of the word in the Russian media. Other examples include the notion of *currency corridor*¹¹⁶, *humanitarian corridor*¹¹⁷, which was used mostly in connection with the war in Chechnya, and *corridor of illegal immigration*, which refers to a passage such as the one that runs from the Smolensk oblast in Russia and the Vitebsk and Mogilev regions in Belarus to Western Europe.¹¹⁸

The most often used variant of the word ‘corridor’ in the media is accompanied by the word *vlast* – power. The phrase *v koridorah vlasti* – in the corridors of power – refers basically to a phenomenon that in the European context has the meaning of lobbyism. Here the use of the phrase refers particularly to *apparatnaya vlast*, that is bureaucratic, administrative power. It is thus used to denote the way in which authority and power function in Russia. In this sense the ‘corridor’ is the semi-public venue of policy-making and is often linked with a concrete location – the Kremlin. The phrase refers to the mechanism by which power works in Russia, namely to the application of informal as well as unwritten rules in the event of policy-making.¹¹⁹

The last example already suggests where the crux of transport corridor policy lies. The space, in this sense, is understood as “an active movement” rather than a “passive frame” in the constitution of physical, ecological, social and political-economic life.¹²⁰ The abrupt change in the Russian geo-economic environment: the shift from a mostly Soviet to a global scale of economic relations changed the whole framework in which transport was regarded in Russia.¹²¹ I will approach this shift by analytically reconstructing the foreground and the background of the picture puzzle, which are, in the final analysis, nested into an assembly – the logic with which the new Russia is built and how impulses from the EU are transformed in the context of Russia’s rebuilding.

¹¹⁵ Kuznetsov 2001, 457.

¹¹⁶ ITAR-TASS 16.5.1996.

¹¹⁷ ITAR-TASS 20.2.1996.

¹¹⁸ ITAR-TASS 5.1.1997.

¹¹⁹ Ledeneva 2001; Hanson 2006; Stoner-Weiss 2006; Baranov and Karaulov 1994.

¹²⁰ On space as a domain of politics see e.g. Giddens 1981, 33; Harvey 2001, 223; Held et al. 1999, 19; Geenhuizen and Ratti 1998, 84–85.

¹²¹ Brown, Ickes and Ryterman 1994; Avdasheva 2007.

3 The Russian transport corridor puzzle

The advertisement for one of Russia's biggest forwarding companies, the DVTG group, can be thought to illustrate the puzzle which this study endeavours to solve.



Map 1. Advertisement for the DVTG Group.¹²²

In the advertisement Russia is envisioned as a bridge between Asia and Europe. The advertisement says: “Whatever your cargo. Wherever its destination”. The territory of Russia is portrayed as a blue sky and the stars in the sky are the company’s freight centres. The freight centres, rather than the thin dotted line marking the border, constitute the interface between local/global and inside/outside of Russia. Europe, Russia and China are locations in the space of the global capital markets. Moscow, which is often represented as the nexus of the Russian space is, in this image, just one of the stars. The yellow figure against the blue background represents an ‘international transport corridor’, and the arrow signifies the main direction of the freight traffic, from Asia to Europe. The figure of the corridor is, in fact, a *service* offered by the company. It is the company that makes travelling through Russia fast, reliable and safe. Thus, it is the yellow figure delineating the corridor rather than the blue background that is highlighted.

In the federal government discourse on transport corridors, the relationship between the delineated corridor and the blue background is reversed. What is

¹²² Rossiiskaya Gazeta 23.3.2005. Reproduced with the permission of the DGTG Group. Parts of this chapter will appear in an article in Hopf, Ted 2008. *Russia’s European Choice*. Palgrave Macmillan.

emphasized is the unity of the transport and political space in contrast to the practice of delineating space into specific ‘corridors’. The image of “Moscow – a port of five oceans” captures what can be regarded as the background vision of the Soviet/Russian space.



Map 2. Moscow as a port of five oceans.¹²³

In order to understand what the shift between the foreground and the background entails, we may start with the notion of a “united transport system” (*Edinaya*

¹²³ USSR in Construction 1932:8.

Transportnaya Sistema, ETS). It captures what is regarded as an essential feature of Russian space and the state policy on transport and infrastructure modernization.¹²⁴ The three main attributes of the ETS are: the coherence or unity (*tselostnost'*) of the infrastructure network, the hierarchy (*ierarhichnost'*) of the different modes of transport, and lastly, the synthesis¹²⁵ (*vzaimoproniknovenie* or *sintez*) of the operation of the system as a whole.¹²⁶ With the emphasis on *tselostnost'*, meaning integrity and unity but also in a more diffuse sense something that is untouched, the arrangement of space that it is subject to calls for effective governance and 'taming'.

The historian J.N. Westwood summarized the problem of transport in Russia in the following way: it is "a consequence of the geographic feature of Russia, the union of an enormous territorial expanse into a single economy".¹²⁷ The paradox depicted in this formulation is that "an enormous territorial expanse" does not readily transform into "a single economy" or into coherent sovereign space. However, the official discourse in Russia addresses ambiguities involved in the building of a 'united transport system' as *temporal obstacles* that can be done away with by improving the system of governance. As this is a permanent feature of the Tsarist, Soviet and subsequent Russian discussion on transport and infrastructure modernization, it also provides a convenient starting point for studying the way in which the 'international transport corridor' concept *figures* against the *background* of existing policies and the purported constellation of geography and politics in Russia. That is, the 'background' retards to the burden of enormous space and the challenges and promises of its effective governance.

In the analytical sense, the shift from the foreground, namely the yellow 'figure' of the corridor, to the background of the blue 'sky', denotes a shift in the purposive order of the Russian space. The foreground – the figure of the corridor – is a constellation of the Russian space formed in accordance with the principle of *competitiveness* in the global markets. The blue background to the figure, however, signifies the *unity of power of the sovereign territory*. In this picture, two

¹²⁴ The use of the notion can be traced back to the 1930s and the systematic study of the subject started in the 1950s. The establishment of the Institute of Complex Transport Problems signaled that problems concerning the 'united transport system' were to be prioritized. Galaburdy 1996, 14–15.

¹²⁵ In current international usage, the equivalent term for synthesis would be multi-modality, which means carriage of goods by two or more modes of transport, irrespective of the types of freight, within a single transport chain.

¹²⁶ Galaburdy 1996, 15.

¹²⁷ Westwood 2002, 79.

versions of spatiality – the “space of flows”¹²⁸, global networking and sovereign territoriality are not seen *a priori* as mutually exclusive but rather as the two coexistent, spatial domains of politics.¹²⁹

What I am suggesting is that the advertisement can be interpreted as a multistable image, or to use a more familiar expression, a picture puzzle that can be utilized as a hypothesis which permits the observer “to look and see” into the word ‘corridor’ and the similarities and differences in its usage.¹³⁰ The concept of the picture puzzle can be traced back to Gestalt psychology and the basic finding that the visual perception of a figure is only possible *against a background*. The background serves to make the figure stand out, while at the same time staying unnoticed itself. Searle explains this by saying that “as the precondition of Intentionality, the Background is invisible to Intentionality as the eye which sees is invisible to itself”. It is the Background that enables us to understand literal meanings and against which the semantic content of utterances functions.¹³¹ To solve the puzzle we should therefore pay attention to the dynamism inherent in the use of language, understanding it as a language game played by rules whereby the shift between the ‘foreground’ and the ‘background’ is actualized and the two layers merge together to form one complete picture again.

My inquiries into the meaning of the transport corridors in Russia are geared to understanding the sense in which corridors are ordered. In other words, what are the purposes and goals that the agencies involved attach to the creation and maintenance of corridor-like arrangements. My task is to reconstruct the way in which the key words and phrases constitutive of the figure in the foreground or that of the background are actualized, and are ultimately ‘nested’ into an assembly. Unlike in usual understandings, where gestalt is reserved for the “truly heroic

¹²⁸ Castells 1996. The order of flows owes its logic to temporal fluctuations; the flux of events, stock-exchange and currency rates and other entities that “can be bought and sold but which you cannot drop on your foot”. Originally this refers to *The Economist* magazine’s definition of ‘services’. Ruggie 1993, 142.

¹²⁹ Agnew 1999; Niemann 1998; Soja 1989; Werner and De Wilde 2001; Agnew 2005.

¹³⁰ I apply here ideas developed under what is called the ‘pictorial turn’, often seen as running parallel to the ‘linguistic turn’, both of which are identified with Ludvig Wittgenstein’s philosophy of language. Mitchell 1995; Usvamaa-Routila 2007. The point is elaborated in more detail in chapter 9.2.

¹³¹ Searle 1983, 157. Whereas Wittgenstein explains the experience of “noticing an aspect” as an interplay between the visual and the verbal, Searle argues that seeing (perception) is a phenomenon of Intentionality. See Searle 1983, 51–52 for a direct response to Wittgenstein’s reading of the Duck-Rabbit picture. On Gestalt, see also Kharkordin 1999; Hanks 1996; Searle 1983, 148–157; Margolis 1989, 343; Danto 1992, 205–206.

philosophical achievements”¹³², the picture puzzle is here used heuristically. It is proposed as an image summarizing the hypothesis of the study, and as such it outlines the point of departure for the analytical approach whereby the research problem can be solved. The picture represents *time* by visualizing it as *space*, and it also shows how continuities and discontinuities from the Soviet period form a puzzle.

4 Summary of the research questions

One of the fascinating features of the present discussion on infrastructure modernization in Russia is the relative ease with which the word ‘corridor’ was adopted into the Russian lexicon. This by no means implies that the use of the term has been unambiguous. Nevertheless, in a very basic sense, the adoption of similar terminology enhances opportunities for a successful dialogue between Russia and the EU. The question is whether the policies pursued in the field of transport are compatible as well. The reshaping of the post-Soviet space, which forms part of Russia’s rebuilding (*obustroistvo*) and the enlargement of the EU are two sides of the same coin of the ‘pan-European corridor’ – a coin that quite literally creates contours for a spatial and temporal re-ordering of Europe.

The question that I seek to answer is what happens to this coin when it gets flipped over in the Russian discourse on transport and infrastructure development? What kind of ‘currency’ is it and for what purpose is it used? The usefulness of this or that semantic currency depends on its convertibility – the value that derives from it being used in a certain way, and in accordance with the rules of a particular game being played. That is, they are unlike actual coins that retain value when passed from hand to hand. The pattern emergent in the argumentation is the ‘way of doing things’, the game played whereby words turn into deeds in Russian politics. The purpose of this analogy is to say that the very combination of the words ‘pan-European’ and ‘international’ and their use in the articulation of Russian policy objectives vis-à-vis transport infrastructure development convey the extent of change (or that of continuation) in Russia’s engagement with Europe.¹³³

¹³² Rorty 1998, 10; see also Kuhn 1996; Mitchell 1995.

¹³³ On the debate between westernizers and slavophiles in tsarist Russia see e.g. Raeff 1990; Berlin 1994; Neumann 1996.

Russia's relations with Europe, and in particular with the EU, are approached in the face of a "triple *dislocation*: territorial, political and economic" encountered by the former Soviet Union countries.¹³⁴ In light of this, studying whether the 'corridors' are place-holders for activities that have relevance from the viewpoint of Russia-EU proximity politics puts this issue in the context of the restructuring of the Russian polity. The 'international transport corridors' puzzle in Russia boils down to the question of to what extent the rebuilding (*obustroistvo*) of the transport infrastructure system suggests a *restructuring* of Russia's economic geography, on the one hand, and a *reconstruction* of the 'united transport system', on the other. Initially, one may note that the policies of reconstruction carry with them a sense of protecting Russia (i.e. Russian entrepreneurs). The restructuring policies are also partly motivated by the need to diversify Russian economy with regard to the reduction of dependency of economic growth on raw material exports, and subsequently, the different types of integration into the adjacent economies and into the global markets.

The research hypothesis hinges on the fact that what we may see emerging is an 'assembly' where the 'foreground' and the 'background' are *nested* together. The 'foreground' is a constellation of policies that are formed *in response* to the formulation of the 'pan-European transport corridor' concept in the all-European context. In the 'foreground' are policies that explicate Russia's response to the internationalization of the country's domestic freight transportation and the dependency of Russia on the transport infrastructures of the neighbouring countries. The 'background', on the other hand, as understood here, implies the non-explicit assumptions against which the reasoning behind the policy takes place. This relates, for example, to the assumptions about the form of state engagement in the market conditions (by controlling or regulating the agencies). The study aims to explicate the set of new and old practices and the 'ways of doing things' constitutive of the 'assembly' and the agentic context in which it is actualized. The research hypothesis is illustrated in Figure 1. The numbering in the figure refers to the research analytical concepts and the organization of the study, which I will return to in more detail in chapter 6.

¹³⁴ Laid 1998, 45. Emphasis added. See also Medvedev 1995a, 6; Medvedev 1995b; Kaganskii 2001; Kordonskii 2006.

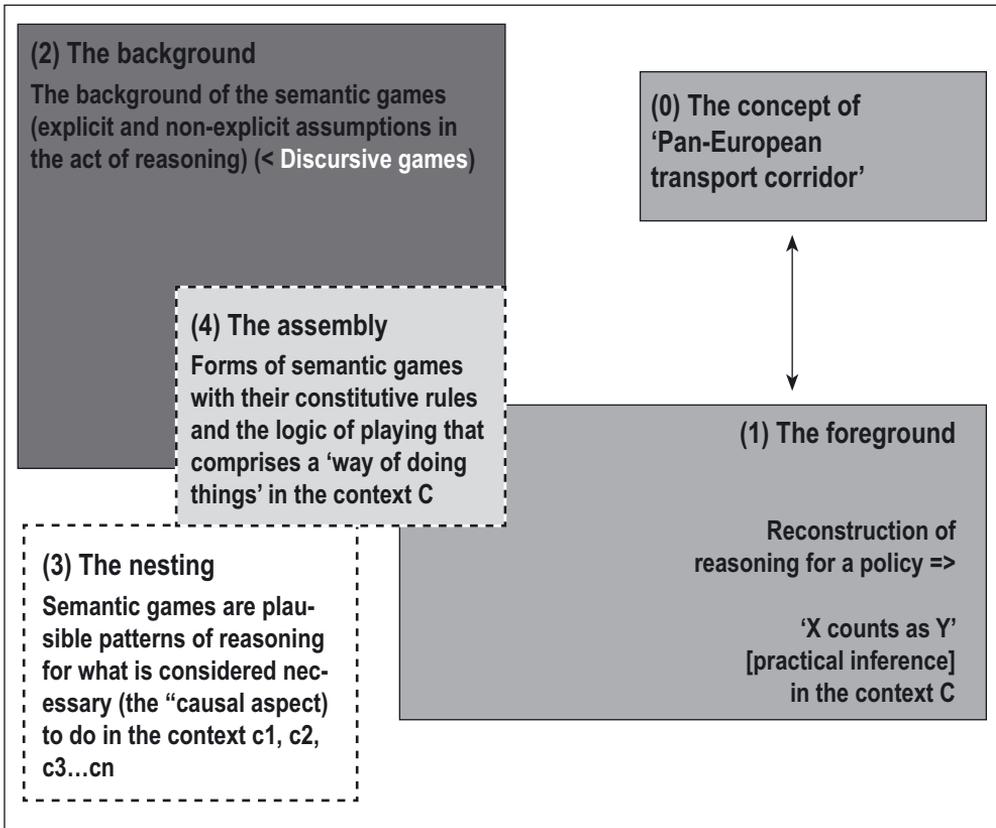


Figure 1. Illustration of the research hypothesis.

The primary challenge of the analysis is to locate the *shift* (represented in the figure by the broken line of the assembly box) whereby the background and the foreground merge to form an 'assembly'. The nesting comprises of the patterns of reasoning with regard to what *is considered necessary* to do in order to achieve the purported end (a policy) in the agentive context (c1, c2, c3... cn). *Nesting* is a new way of seeing the constellation of geography and politics in Russia. In this analysis, the nesting of the foreground and the background into an assembly concludes with the reconstruction of the forms of *semantic games* with their constitutive rules and the *logic of playing* in accordance with which *things get done* in Russia.

It should be emphasized that the set of 'semantic games' constitutive of the assembly are the result of my reconstruction of the argumentation for a policy rather than something which can be 'found' in the discourse as such. The semantic games are *instances* of discursive games, and with my analysis of the reasoning

I will reconstruct a range of policy responses (the syntagmatic dimension), and consequently, ‘resemblances’ between the patterns of argumentation (the paradigmatic dimension).

The inquiry into semantic games is inspired by Roger Caillois’ research into the relation between the ‘forms of life’ and the games people play. The central insight of Caillois’s study is that even if all games are universal, they are not played the same way nor to the same extent everywhere.¹³⁵ The difference in the understanding of what the ‘game’ is about and how one should go about playing it leads to different actions. By studying the games constitutive of the Russian policy on the development of the corridors, and the logic of playing semantic games, we may assess the *possibilities* of *dialogue* on transport between Russia and the EU.¹³⁶

5 Relation to previous studies

The study falls largely into the ‘no-man’s-land’ separating the International Relations (IR) discipline from International Political Economy (IPE).¹³⁷ The study neither takes part exclusively in the debates about classical geopolitics, nor for that matter, in those engaged in defining the critical geopolitics approach to the study of the interrelationship between geography and politics. New avenues of thinking can be opened up where different disciplinary approaches cross each other.

This study starts from where what is broadly referred to as Sovietology, in particular the studies on the Soviet economy, ended after the collapse of the Soviet Union.¹³⁸ The term Sovietology is rarely used at the present time and for good reason. The track record of the Soviet studies, that is studies conducted on the Soviet regime and its particular manifestations (in a particular country within

¹³⁵ Caillois 1961, 85.

¹³⁶ Caillois 1961. My application of Caillois’ conceptualizations of the games is elaborated in chapter 14.1.

¹³⁷ Strange 1988; Strange 1996.

¹³⁸ On the planning of state economic and industrial policies and economic thinking in the Soviet Union see Hough and Fainsod 1979; Conyngham 1982; Bornstein 1981; Lewin 1974; Nove 1977; Rigby et al. 1980; Susiluoto 1982; Sutela 1984; Hanson 1992; and in Russia: Fortescue 1997; Gustafson 1999; Shaw 1999; Mau and Starodubrovskaya 2001; Reddaway 2001; Gaddy and Ickes 2002; Heusala 2005; Kordonskii 2006.

the block or sphere of society/economics) came in for a lot of criticism after the fall of the Soviet Union.¹³⁹ In the 1990s the mainstream approach to Russian politics was to call it Transistology and the studies conducted in this framework focused on the transformation of institutions (the party system, other public institutions, centre-region relations, and so forth) that were considered central to the emergence of a market economy and the democratic rule of government in Russia. This study has benefited from earlier studies on Russian space thematic.¹⁴⁰ However, my focus is on how ‘clearing away the rupture’ of the Soviet system unfolds as Russia’s rebuilding. The word rebuilding (*obustroistvo*) carries with it a sense of the *continuous* rearrangement of the old and the new.¹⁴¹ My focus, therefore, is on ‘arrangements’ (the assembly) whereby Russia is being rebuilt.

Paraphrasing Susan Strange’s definition of the study of international political economy, this study deals with the political and economic arrangements that affect Russia’s involvement with the global systems and, in particular, with the EU. “Those arrangements are not divinely ordained”, she writes, “nor are they the fortuitous outcome of blind chance. Rather they are the result of human decisions taken in the context of man-made institutions and sets of self-set rules and customs”.¹⁴² In this respect, my study departs from the previous studies on Russia’s infrastructure policies, and in particular from the development of the transport and infrastructure system between Russia and the EU member states.

Previous studies on this theme have focused rather narrowly on the problems relating to the cargo transportation and border-crossing between Russia and the EU, the environmental and other impacts of the building of new ports on the Russian part of the Gulf of Finland, and on the role of the transit countries (the ‘Gateways’) to Russia. Studies focusing on the EU-Russia partnership, on the other hand, often cite transport as one of the objects of the ‘dialogue’, without further elaborating on its content.¹⁴³ Also worth noting are those studies which fall within the discipline of history and which focus on the development of specific modes of transport in Russia, often the railways.¹⁴⁴ My study does not

¹³⁹ For an overview of these debates see e.g. Schroeder 1995; Sakwa 1999.

¹⁴⁰ Medvedev 1995; Medvedev 1997; Kaganskii 2001; Smith 1999.

¹⁴¹ Benjamin 2007, 108.

¹⁴² Strange 1988, 18.

¹⁴³ See e.g. Brodin 2003; Pekkarinen 2005; Hernesniemi, Auvinen and Dudarev 2005; Ollus and Simola 2006; Hilmola 2007; Pursiainen 2007; Liuhto 2007.

¹⁴⁴ Williams 1962; Westwood 1964; Mote 1990; Rodgers 1990; Kraskovskii et al. 1994; Haywood 1998; Westwood 2002; Rees 1995; Juntunen 1997; Heywood 1999. On modernization in the Soviet Union and Russia see e.g. Carr 1970; Davies 1989; Kotkin 1997; Taranovski 1995; Blackwell 1994; Autio 2002; Kangaspuro and Smith 2006; Ryabov 2005.

seek to provide an overview of infrastructure modernization in Russia. Rather, it tries to assess the contours of thinking about the infrastructures vis-à-vis the task of modernization of the country, and its integration with the global markets and the EU. In this way, the study takes part in the theorizing on how the changes in the policy ideas are linked to the evolutionary dynamics of infrastructure and technology development.¹⁴⁵

6 Analytical tools and organization of the study

This study is organized around the idea of a ‘picture puzzle’ and each subsequent section of the study, the ‘foreground’, the ‘background’, the ‘assembly’ and the ‘nesting’ signify a step towards assessing the ‘shift’ whereby the new constellation emerges (see Figure 1). In the section that follows I will explicate the order of the steps taken and the logic of the empirical research analysis.

An introduction to the new concept ‘pan-European transport corridor’ (Phase 0 in Figure 1) is the starting point for the study (chapters 2.3.1 and 11). The ‘pan-European transport corridors’ remain, however, outside the scope of my research interest. Rather, I focus on how the concept of ‘pan-European corridor’ is used as a ‘semantic currency’ in the context of Russian politics and, by reconstructing the reasoning for a policy, show how this ‘currency’ was converted and used in that context.

The starting point for the empirical research analysis is an *instance of language use*, a *communicative event* such as a newspaper article, an interview, a policy document, a map or, for example, a photograph that explicates the relation between a desired action and the current state of affairs (a policy).¹⁴⁶ A policy is defined here as “a purposeful course of action designed and implemented with the objective of shaping future outcomes in ways that will be more desirable than would be otherwise expected”.¹⁴⁷ Policies are analyzed as a practical process of argumentation.¹⁴⁸ In particular, this research tries to assess the perceived

¹⁴⁵ On formation of the characteristics of technologies and new institutions in the transport sphere see e.g. Gruber 1999; cf. Pedersen 2007; Brown and Earle 2001; Brodin 2001. For studies on this theme that fall within the IR/IPE see e.g. Held et al. 1999; Buzan, Jones and Little 1993; Ruggie 1993.

¹⁴⁶ Phillips-Jorgensen 2004; Austin 1965.

¹⁴⁷ Anderson 1979, 24. Cited in Soroos 1986, 19.

¹⁴⁸ Fisher and Forester 1993.

determinants (the ‘causal’ factors) in the light of which certain policy design and, subsequently, its implementation are considered appropriate by the policy-making and policy-implementing agencies.

Searle’s formula ‘X counts as Y in C’ is applied here in two interrelated ways. First, the formula describes both the situational (temporal) and logical structure of the construction of institutional facts. The logical structure of institutional facts is built upon a presupposition of ‘some-thing’; an object or phenomenon (the X element) that by *the assignment* (of collective intentionality) of a *new status function* (the Y term) is situated within a larger network of meaning; and following on from this, may acquire a durable ‘thing-ness’, that is, become an *institutional ‘f-act’*. This larger network of meaning is a system of *constitutive rules* whereby each instance of language use either confirms or changes this constitutive rule system. The situational use of language, its ability to generate change in established discourses, is what makes this analytical structure dynamic, whereas the identification of conventions helps to identify the range of systems of practices and discourses against which the change always establishes itself.

Secondly, in the formula ‘X counts as Y in C’ the ‘count as’ locution is a “causal” attribute in the sense that the ‘causal aspect’ in the reasoning rests on what is *considered necessary* to do in a given agentive context. Thus, the analysis of status functions cannot be reduced to the formal logic of syllogisms.¹⁴⁹ Rather, the imposition of the status function is an instance of language use where the fit between word and world rests on whether the argument is convincing, that is, whether it is collectively and continuously accepted. The specific reasoning for the assignment of a new status function (‘pan-European transport corridor’/ ‘international transport corridor’) is reconstructed by applying the scheme of practical reasoning. This is explicated in Figure 1. as follows:

¹⁴⁹ A syllogism is a mode of argument that forms the core of the body of Western logical thought. First introduced by Aristotle, every syllogism is a sequence of three propositions such that the first two imply the third, the conclusion. According to Aristotle: “a syllogism is discourse in which certain things being stated, something other than what is stated follows of necessity from their being so. I mean by the last phrase that they produce the consequence, and by this, that no further term is required from without in order to make the consequence necessary”. What Searle is saying is that the “substitution of co-referential terms in function contexts fails to guarantee the preservation of the truth value”. He continues by introducing the following example: If ‘the function of A is to X’ together with ‘X-ing is identical to Y-ing’ it does not imply that ‘the function of A is to Y’. The normative component of functions cannot be reduced to causation alone. Instead Searle distinguishes between two different types of functions: those assigned in relation to the practical interests of agents (agentive functions) and those that are part of the theoretical account of the phenomena (non-agentive functions). Searle 1995, 18–20. Cf. Ryan 1984; Walton 2001.

'X counts as Y'

[practical inference]

in the context C

The practical reasoning scheme explicates a pattern of argumentation for what to do, and thereby in its conclusion we have an *action*. The scheme has a form:

A intends to bring about *p*.

A considers that he cannot bring about *p* unless he does *a*.

Therefore A sets himself to do *a*.¹⁵⁰

In this study, the scheme is applied in identifying in each communicative event a set of policy statements that put forward the aims and ends of Russian policy vis-à-vis transport corridors. The set of policy statements consists of the 'final aspect' (the purported goal of a policy), the 'causal aspect' that explicates *what is considered necessary* in a specific context (c1, c2, c3...cn) to attain the goal, and finally, the rational inference drawn as a result of reasoning, i.e. an authorized action.

The empirical analysis proceeds in four phases. First, in the section titled the 'Foreground', I will start (phase 1 in Figure 1) by identifying the *policy statement(s)* that suggest the aims and ends of Russian policy vis-à-vis transport corridors. By applying the aforementioned formula 'X counts as Y', I will identify a semantic range of agentive contexts (c1, c2, c3...cn) in which the 'statuses' of the 'pan-European'/'international' transport corridor were assigned meaning.

In the second phase (2), termed the 'background', I will reconstruct a range of non-explicit assumptions (premises) against the background of which an instance of the assignment of the new status function 'pan-European'/'international' transport corridor takes place. Therefore, in this second phase I will assess the range of policies and practices constitutive of the Soviet transport system. For the sake of clarification, I am not studying the Soviet transport system as such, but will assess how the discursive and non-discursive practices characteristic of that period are present in the current discussion. The third phase of analysis draws together the lines of reasoning reconstructed as a result of the previous two phases. In the section titled the Nesting, the task is to reconstruct the practical inference that emerges as a conclusion from the premises. The study unfolds not only a pattern

¹⁵⁰ Von Wright 1971, 96. See chapter 9.3 for discussion on how the scheme is applied in this study.

of reasoning for political action in terms of which policies are implemented, but also the more profound reasoning whereby policies are possible in the first place. In the section titled the Assembly, I will analyse the forms of the games in terms of which the 'semantic currency' of the 'pan-European'/'international transport corridor' came into play in the context of Russian politics.

The study concludes with a discussion on the implications of the research results for Russia-EU relations. The coordinates of this discussion have been preliminarily outlined in the introduction. The theoretical interpretation of the empirical research results centres on the significance of the 'international transport corridor' concept in Russia. This question concerns the ways in which Russia engages in and responds to the challenges of internationalization and globalization. The policy implications drawn from the research results focus on the possibility of 'dialogue' between Russia and the EU in the sphere of transport.

7 Identification of empirical sources

The time frame of the study falls largely within the trajectory of economic stabilization in Russia, from the late 1990s until today.¹⁵¹ The establishment of the nine 'pan-European Corridors' in 1994 provides a starting point for the study.¹⁵² Discussion on the corridors intensified in Russia in 1997 when the government accepted the Concept of Transport Policy. In 1997 Russia participated in the Third pan-European Transport Conference in Helsinki, while the first International Euro-Asian Transport Conference was organized in St. Petersburg one year later. The Russian position on the transport corridor development was consolidated largely between the years 2000–2005. The Transport Strategy was preliminary accepted by the Russian government in early 2004. In the same year, the two major branch ministries – the Ministry of Transport (Mintrans) and the Railways Ministry (MPS) – were reorganized into one Ministry of Transport.¹⁵³ This was

¹⁵¹ Sutela 2004, 118, 139–142; see also Lewin 2000, 288–294.

¹⁵² I will not follow the revision of the guidelines for the transport infrastructure investments in the EU, initiated after the accession of the ten new member states in spring 2004. This is an important issue because in the new guidelines the corridor concept no longer has the status of a main reference point for investments in the area. Rather, the infrastructure investments are streamlined to fit the general EU transport policy framework.

¹⁵³ The long-time Minister of Transport, Sergei Frank, served as minister between 1998 and 2004. During this time the main documents for the modernization of Russia's transport system were formulated. President Putin dismissed the government before the presidential

significant turning point in the relations of the state agencies in the transport sector. One year later, in May 2005 the Transport Strategy was finally approved and in the same discussion on 'strategic industries' emerged into public.

In the Foreground section (see Figure 1), the main body of empirical research material is of a *contractual* nature. It includes formal agreements or declarations of intent approved by the EU Commission, major international agencies involved in designing European transport policy (The European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT) and The United Nations Economic Council of Europe (UN/ECE)), the federal government of the Russian Federation and the main branch ministries (Ministry of Transport or Ministry of Railways). Most documents of this type are unambiguous to the extent that we can say that parties to the agreement are bound to act accordingly (typically a document includes such aspects as a clear description of when it comes into force, under what conditions it is maintained, who is eligible and for what).

In the second phase, the section titled the Background, the analysis proceeds with a combination of primary and secondary material. In the main, the secondary material consists of the previous studies on the Soviet and Russian transport system. The earlier research results and insights are combined with the primary material including, for example, newspaper material, news reports and public statements by the authorities. The latter are instances that help to discern the 'foreground' and the 'background' in the argumentation for a policy.

In the third phase, the Nesting section, the empirical research material includes investment decisions, other relevant government decrees and further material related to the following projects: the port of Primorsk, the Chita–Khabarovsk highway project in the Khabarovskii kraii, and the building of the railway link between the towns of Ledmozero and Kotchkoma in the Republic of Karelia. All the projects, with the exception of the port of Primorsk, were already on the agenda during the Soviet era. All the projects, except for the Ledmozero-Kotchkoma railway, have been declared of primary importance for the country. What is more, all the projects, apart from the Chita–Khabarovsk highway, are located in North-West Russia. The variation in phase, location and importance of the projects allows cross comparisons between the reasoning behind the particular project and its implementation.

An inquiry into the breadth of meaning of the corridor concept in Russia necessitates a more complex set of primary and secondary material than that

elections in early 2004, and during his second term Igor Levitin has served as Minister of Transport.

mentioned above. Secondary research material includes earlier research on the processes of policy design and policy implementation in Russia. In the fourth and last phase of the research, the Assembly, I will apply earlier research on the different game forms in my interpretation of the empirical research analysis.

II

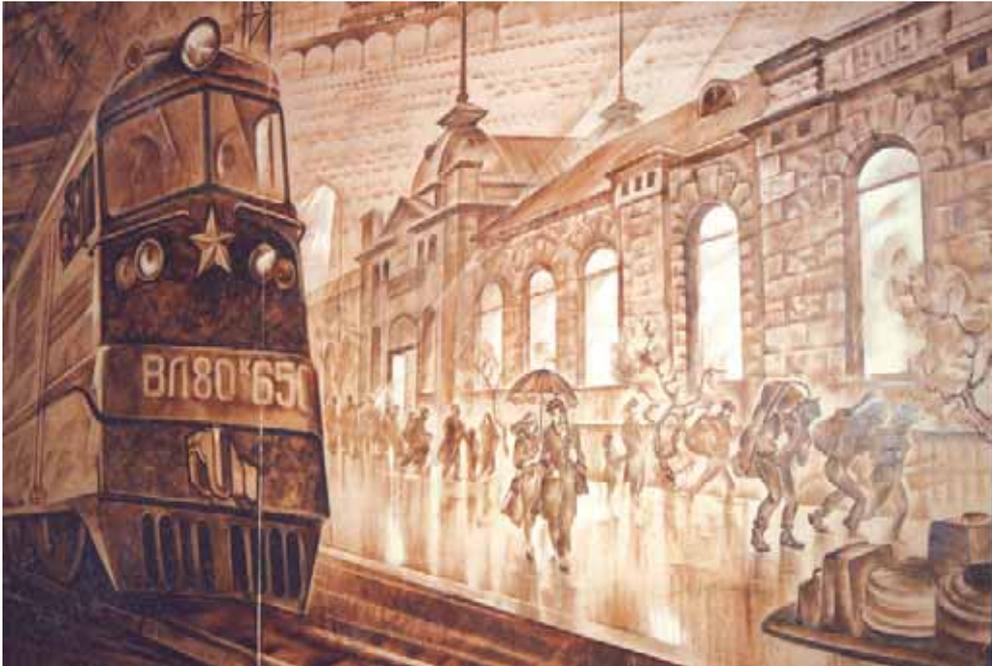
Theoretical and Methodological Points of Departure



Sunday afternoon in Moscow, Russia, August 1999. Photograph by the author.

8 Space as a domain of Russian politics

8.1 A country made of directions



A panel at the History Museum of the East-Siberian Railways, Slyudyanka, Russia, June 2002. Photograph by the author.

Russia stretches over eleven time zones and in each of them trains depart and arrive according to Moscow time.¹ For local people living, for example, by Lake Baikal in the village of Sludyanka the friction between local time and the time of the pass-paying trains structures their everyday life experience. The darkness of the night is in stark contrast to the time shown on a digital clock on the wall of the railway waiting room. For people following their daily routines, the time on the

¹ A similar practice was used in the mid-nineteenth century in France where railway stations followed Paris time and clocks outside the station were set at local time. Great Britain was among the countries to adopt a standard railway time in 1854 and others followed suit soon afterwards. In the United States four standard meridians were set for railway scheduling and weather forecasting in 1870. The division of the Earth into twenty-four one-hour time zones, spaced 15 degrees apart, with Greenwich as the zero longitude lone or prime meridian was agreed upon between twenty-five nations in 1884. Miller 2001, 202–203, 308–309. See also Levine 1997.

railway platform serves as a reminder of the centrifugal power of Moscow. This is a radical form of simultaneity, the ‘annihilation of space by time’² that both reinforces and undermines the sense of connectivity in Russia.

The line of reasoning which states that Russia ‘is too big’ is shorthand for explaining why the country does not ‘fit’ into the West, notably into the EU.³ On the other hand, the phrase is also used to explain that because Russia ‘is *too* big’ country’s *not* playing by the rules of those same institutions goes unhindered, leaving behind a trace of bewilderment and wariness.⁴ From the Russian viewpoint, the country is *not* too big. On the contrary, in the Russian political discourse the vast landmass is a positive abstraction: it translates into power and influence in international politics. Accordingly, the creation and maintenance of the ‘united economic space’ or the ‘united transport system’ is a necessity and not a matter of choice. The words of writer and railway engineer N.G. Garin-Mihailovskii aptly capture this line of thinking: “for us railways are necessary like air, like water. The East will die without roads”.⁵

The early history and development of Russia was closely tied to the rivers and river transport rather than to the roads and railways.⁶ In the wake of industrialization and the expansion of trade relations, river transport gradually became obsolete. This was because Russia’s rivers run in a north-south direction

² Harvey 1990, 205.

³ In the words of historian Halecki: “whatever is colossal and uniform is definitely non-European [...], a purely geographical answer to the problem of Europe is inadequate and it is equally obvious that the area included in the historical concept of the European community cannot be extended indefinitely into the plains of northern Asia”. Cited in Capacci 2001, 591; cf. Trenin 2001.

⁴ Economist 15.7.2006; Economist 16.12.2006; Economist 14.4.2007; Economist 19.5.2007.

⁵ Garin-Mihailovskii was cited in the foreword written by the Minister of Railways Gennadi Fadeev in a book on the history of railway transport in Russia published in 1994. A less eschatological version of the same argument derives from British geographer Halford Mackinder, who wrote in his famous essay for the Royal Geographical Society in 1904 how with “a network of railways” Russia would become a pivot of history: “a heartland of Euro-Asia”. Mackinder 1951, 41; Kraskovskii et al. 1994, 4.

⁶ The first railway was brought into operation in Russia in 1809. It was a two-kilometre line at the Zmeinogorsk mines in the Altai which used horse traction. The line was a technically significant experiment but its existence was hardly known outside the Altai region, writes Westwood in his study on Russian Railways. The introduction of this new technology did not ruin waterway carriers as was the case in England and other countries. The slow decline in river transport only started in the mid-nineteenth century with the building of the St. Petersburg-Moscow railway. The major disadvantages of river transport were connected with geography. Russian rivers run in a north-south direction while the traffic flows are primarily in an east-west direction. Also, the major problem was that the navigation season was limited to nine months in the south and six weeks in the north. This was one of the factors that hindered the development of river-rail combined transport. Westwood 1964, 20, 285–290; Figes 2003, 84; Chernukha and Anan’ich 1995, 55–56.

and the navigation season was limited to nine months in the south and six weeks in the north. Road transport on the other hand was practically viable only in winter when high speeds could be maintained on ice.⁷ It was a steam engine coupled with a pair of rails that liberated the movement of people and freight from seasonal fluctuations. The practical hardships of travelling through Russia highlight a critical factor stemming from her geographical location in the northern part of the Eurasian continent.⁸ It also reveals a major incompatibility as far as sovereign territoriality is concerned: a simultaneous requirement to stretch state power ‘over space’ and the actual capacity of the state to act at a distance.

In the famous closing passage of Nikolai Gogol’s novel *The Adventures of Chichikov or Dead Souls* first published in 1842, the “thundering troika” vanishes “like a whirlwind” into the dust. In this vision, Russia overcomes the burden of space, transforming that which weighs upon her into a motion; into accelerating speed allowing her to leave other peoples and nations behind.⁹ In the Soviet period the slogan of ‘catching up and overcoming’ the West famously captured this vision. The Soviet modernization changed the agrarian Russian landscape into a modern network of urban, industrial centres.

In the current Russian politics the endeavour to overcome the West has been replaced by a no less ambiguous, but at least more translatable, quest to achieve “stable and fast economic growth” and to improve the “competitiveness” of Russia in the global markets.¹⁰ When aspiring to understand this shift we can benefit from glancing through a “worm hole” Gogol left in his narrative about the Russian troika. What we see is that “handy muzhik” from Yaroslav who “hastily, with a slam and a bang”, “with nothing but an axe and a chisel” had put together the vehicle the troika draws.¹¹ The novel opens with the following exchange between two muzhiks “in a certain provincial capital” at which Chichikov arrives.

⁷ For example in Yakutia in eastern Siberia, winter roads are used from 100 to 125 days in the south and from 180 to 220 days in the north. In Chukotka, the north-eastern tip of Russia, winter roads comprise 80 per cent of all roads. The melting of the permafrost due to climate change is the latest challenge to beset the northern regions of Russia. A new set of roads and bridges should be built to replace those created by nature. Rodgers 1990, 204; Westwood 1964, 7–8, 18–19, 286. I am grateful to Tero Mustonen for providing me with information about climate change in the northern regions of Russia and the transportation conditions.

⁸ Gruber 1999; Vance 1989; Westwood 1964. For descriptions of travelling in Russia in the nineteenth century see e.g. Figs 2002; Applebaum 2003; Radishchev 1958; Marmier 1999; Ramstedt 1944; and for later periods e.g. Steinbeck 2000; Thubron 1983.

⁹ Gogol 1996, 248.

¹⁰ Putin 2002; Garadzha 2006; Surkov 2006.

¹¹ Gogol 1996, 248.

‘Look at that, will you?’ says one muzhik to another. ‘What a wheel! What do you think, would that wheel make it to Moscow, if need be, or wouldn’t it?’ ‘It would,’ answered the other. And with that the discussion ended.¹²

The two muzhiks had not the slightest *practical interest* in whether Chichikov’s carriage would make it to Moscow, nor did they even know how far ‘N’ (an imaginary place in Russia) was from Moscow, Kazan or any other place in the world. These two muzhiks are the great innovative potential of the Russian people incarnate. As Vladimir Nabokov puts it, it is “an ability to work in complete emptiness”, and thus, to combine that which at the outset seems incompatible.¹³ I am citing Gogol because his prose is among the most elegant when it comes to capturing the incompatibility between the human aspiration to envisage the accomplishment of great deeds, and those murky roads that inhibit completion of the envisioned tasks. Although we should resist the temptation to look for anything “authentically Russian” in the novel, the way in which the story is told unravels the paradox whereby Russian space is understood not as an asset but as a burden.¹⁴

In Gogol’s novel, the wonderful word “road” denotes a direction (*napravleniya*) that leads somewhere else rather than to somewhere in particular. This Gogolian Russia is a country where there is “nothing to be seen anywhere: wasteland everywhere, everything is out in the open”.¹⁵ On close inspection, one may argue that today’s Russia also encompasses a set of directions rather than a well-connected network of roads. A question addressed to President Putin by a man called Maksim during an internet question-and-answer session in July 2006 vividly illustrates the contemporary contours of the ‘united transport system’:

Dear Vladimir Vladimirovich, please answer a question: when, on the outskirts of Russia and in the simple small towns, will there be ordinary, human, civilized roads, instead of directions? Taxes are very high, but there are no roads. Furthermore, our car-manufacturing industry could simply

¹² Gogol 1996, 1.

¹³ Nabokov 1963, 96. On the appropriateness of Russian thinking to “revolutionary dreams” see e.g. Stites 1989; Buck-Morss 2002a.

¹⁴ Gogol had no firsthand experience of the Russian countryside apart from eight hours spent at a tavern in Podolsk, and one week in Kursk. Everything else he saw from the window of his carriage combined with his childhood memories from Ukraine. Nabokov 1963, 90.

¹⁵ Gogol 1996, 222. Cf. Vasily Klyuchevsky, who referred to Russian space as a “shapeless emanation of endlessness”. Revzin 2002, 39.

be shut down because it is unprofitable for Russians. Thank you in advance for the answer. Maksim 23 years, Izhevsk.¹⁶

The backbone of Russia's infrastructure network consists of 85,800 kilometres of railway lines and little more than one million kilometres of roads.¹⁷ Although Russia's rail system remains one of the largest and the most intensively operated in the world, in a very basic sense the Soviet heritage provides a challenge rather than an advantage for the circulation of capital in today's Russia.¹⁸ The average age of the industrial infrastructure base has increased not decreased during the last 15 years, and large parts of the country are poorly connected to the main infrastructure network.¹⁹

The studies conducted in the 1970s on the structure of the inter-regional commodity flows showed that "about half the area of the country is not involved to any significant extent in the transport system; in fact, 55 per cent of the country lies more than 100 km from a railway line".²⁰ A study on freight transport in the Soviet Union concluded by noting that the "Soviet rail network is small. It represents essentially a planned system of main routes without competitive overlap and with feeder lines developed sufficiently only to support major sources of tonnage on a minimum basis. Its growth has been carefully controlled and has been minor in comparison to the growth of traffic moved over the system". The promotion of economic growth was not sought in the building of the new

¹⁶ Internet conference with President Vladimir Putin 6.7.2006. URL: <http://president.yandex.ru>.

¹⁷ Russia has the second largest rail system in the world, after the US. Of the total length of railways, 32,000 km are double track, 41,600 are electrified and 11,400 are spurs owned by shippers. The length of Russia's road network is 1,137 thousand kilometres. There are 44 km of paved roads per 1000 km³, compared with 600 km per 1000 km³ in the United States. In the European part of Russia the road network is only one-sixth that of Latvia, one-fifth of Estonia, and one-third of Ukraine. It should be noted, of course, that the severe climatic conditions in Russia, especially in Siberia and the northern regions of Russia's Far East, make road construction in that part of the world substantially more difficult than in milder environments. Eijbergen, B. et al. 2004, 8; Transport Rossii 18.–24.12.2000; OECD 2005, 138.

¹⁸ In the mid-1970s, 85 per cent of the goods-traffic turnover of the four main media consisted of bulk goods. Transport flows were also highly concentrated as 46 per cent of the route length carried 86 per cent of all freight traffic. Westwood 1964, 231, 258–259; Mellor 1975, 92; Westwood 2002, 98.

¹⁹ In 1990 the average age of industrial plants and equipment was 10.8 years; by 1996 it had risen to 14.9 years. Gaddy and Ickes 2002, 20.

²⁰ Mellor 1975, 83–92

transport network, although the low density of lines within the Soviet territory might have made such a policy appropriate.²¹

To summarize, the infrastructure system is dense in the European part of Russia as the majority of the population live there and it is the locus of the economy. The areas in the north and east of the St. Petersburg–Novorossiisk–Omsk triangle, on the other hand, lack proper connections to the main transport network.²² The primary factor shaping Russia's transport infrastructure system has remained the same, irrespective of the regime change. Russia's geographical location in the northern part of Eurasia confers upon her the harsh climatic conditions that hamper development of infrastructures beyond the above-mentioned triangle. However, climatic and geographical challenges are coupled with challenges that stem from the technologies and administrative practices that have a bearing upon travelling through the country.

8.2 A narrative about a container shipped past Russia

At the Second International Euro-Asian transport conference in 2000, Russia's Minister of Transport, Sergei Frank, concluded his speech by saying:

Ten years ago, when the Iron Curtain fell, it seemed to many that there were no more barriers standing in the way of joint cooperation and integration. But life has demonstrated that in contrast to ideological isolation, the differences in project approaches, in technologies, and standards are sometimes more difficult to overcome. This is not something which can be achieved overnight, but which calls for lengthy and painstaking collaboration. An international transport community that step-by-step shapes the outlook of Eurasian transport systems in the 21st century is doing just this work. It will be repaid a hundredfold, turning into our contribution to the improvement of quality of life on Earth, the preservation of nature, and the convergence of national cultures and economic systems.²³

The parallel drawn between the iron curtain and the differences in administrative practices, technologies and technical standards suggests that the call for the

²¹ Williams 1962, 133.

²² Tarkhov 1995, 256. Russia has a T-shaped system where the head of the T-shape is the north-south movement axis along the railways between the north-western industrial area, the Central Industrial and Central Black Earth Regions and the Industrial South, accompanied by strong arterial movements along the east-west axis from the Central Industrial area via the Urals to Western Siberia and Baykalia. Mellor 1975, 83–92.

²³ Frank 2000e.

harmonization of the rules and practices of international transportation is often hampered by the operationalization of those same rules and regulations as a foreign policy resource. At the same time, the order cast in iron and moulded in the form of a single sovereign state has given way to the “space of flows”²⁴, that is, the globalization of international trade and commerce, the single most visible symbol of which is the shipping container, carried on almost every mode of transport to almost every corner of the globe.

It was the invention of the shipping container in the 1950s which completely transformed the way in which freight traffic was handled. This metal box, designed to facilitate the loading and unloading of cargo at ports (and en route), led to the transformation of the whole transport industry, and subsequently, the transformation of the inter-state or intra-state economic environment. As a consequence, an entirely new set of ports sprang up, leaving tens of thousands of longshoremen unemployed but, at the same time, making the transport of goods over long-distances cheaper and quicker. The containerization of trade had far-reaching results for it was a critical factor in the emergence of the global markets.²⁵ The following example not only illustrates the way in which a video recorder produced in South Korea finds its way to Vladivostok in Russia, but also pinpoints the (non)emerging interfaces between global and local, space and place, state and markets.

The major trans-shipment route is a detour circumventing Eurasia proper. In the first phase of the journey the video recorder is shipped on a huge container ship via the Suez Canal to a major European port. From there, a container bound for Vladivostok continues the journey first to Finland, where it is either stored awaiting further delivery or immediately carried on a truck to Russia. At the Finnish-Russian border the truck will in all probability get stuck in a queue waiting to cross the border into Russia.²⁶ After perhaps a two-day delay at the border, the

²⁴ Castells 1996.

²⁵ Cited in Rybszynski 2006. For critical appraisals of globalization discourse see e.g. Rosenberg 2005, 6–7; Sakwa 2004. Writers writing inside the globalization box, with varied criticisms in mind, include e.g. McMichael 2000; Palan 2000; Dicken 2000.

²⁶ The long lines of trucks crossing the Finnish-Russian border emerged around the mid-1990s and extended for just a couple of kilometres at first. In September 2006 the queue which during the previous couple of years had normally been from 10 to 15 km reached all the way to Hamina (about 40 km from the border). The lengthening queue is in large part due to increased traffic, especially new cars that are transported via Finland to Russia. By the end of 2006, the authorities in Finland agreed on several emergency measures that would improve road safety along the route from Hamina to the border. Similar problems with road transport are encountered at both the Lithuanian-Latvian and Latvian-Russian borders. See e.g. Pursiainen 2007.

truck continues on its way to Moscow where the part of the cargo destined for Vladivostok is transferred to the train on which it continues its journey further eastwards.

In a variation on the theme, the container carrying the video recorder is shipped from South Korea to the port of Vladivostok, from where it continues by special express train across Russia to Finland, is stored for a while in Finland and then carried back by truck to Russia. In specialist jargon, this practice is referred to as “artificial transit”. This type of freight traffic virtually came to a halt at the beginning of 2006 after the sharp increase in transit tariffs along the trans-Siberian railway.²⁷ Perhaps the most straightforward and least time-consuming version of the story is the one where a shuttle-trader goes to South Korea, buys a video recorder from a shop or on the black market and then carries it back home to Vladivostok.²⁸

The narrative about the video recorder’s journey from South Korea to Vladivostok illuminates the different domains of “interaction capacity”²⁹ from sovereign territoriality marked by the multiple crossings over the state border to a more diffuse sense of global interaction practices embodied in the practice of shuttle-trading. But it should be noted that the demarcation line between state/private or official/unofficial spheres is not as clear as it might seem. The practice of rerouting high-value consumer goods bound for Russia through Finland proved to be profitable for those willing to pursue grey tax schemes.³⁰ The lack of specialized cargo-handling infrastructure and storage space, coupled with the availability of such services in Finland made this route attractive to shippers. Ultimately, the fact that trucks destined for Russia through Finland were standing in line for days rather than for hours is a symptom of the ‘incompleteness’ of Russia’s transformation, in this case the non-implementation into practice of reforms in the sphere of customs administration.

The narrative also points to the difference in the dynamics of infrastructure development in Russia compared to Finland, or to Europe in general. In the 1990s, only 1 to 2 per cent of cargo transport handled by the Russian railways was carried in containers. Even as late as 1999 only a handful of Russian trans-shipment

²⁷ Kommersant 9.6.2004; see also Ollus and Simola 2006.

²⁸ The story of the video recorder was told by an adviser of the Minister of Transport of the RF, the Chairman of the supervisory board of the EuroAsian Logistics Association, Rashad Guseinov, in an interview for the TV channel RBK on 27.10.2005. See also Guseinov 2006.

²⁹ Buzan, Jones and Little 1993, 72.

³⁰ For more on tax avoidance and customs practices at the Finnish-Russian border see Ollus and Simola 2006.

stations were equipped to handle larger containers. Moreover, during a significant part of the Soviet era, containers had ‘disappeared’ en route, ending up in new locations and put to new uses; for example as garages, mushroom plantations, bath-houses, etc.³¹ The stacks of abandoned containers are not, however, a feature that is unique to the former Soviet landscape. As Marc Levinson notes, discarded containers litter landscapes around the world, creating environmental problems, while the possibility of their ‘non-conventional’ use in terrorist activities or, as is often the case, in transporting illegal immigrants, makes this otherwise very ‘functional’ invention a matter of national and human insecurity.³²

Notwithstanding the difference in the technology used in freight handling in Russia, the growth of containerization has been rapid in recent years. In Russia the volume of containers used in trans-shipments tripled between 1998 and 2005 from 0.5 mln TEU to 1.7 mln TEU annually and is estimated to grow tenfold by 2010. However, the projected capacity of Russian ports to handle containers (20 million TEU) will not exceed the current capacity of the world’s largest container port in Singapore.³³ The special container services that run between the major cities in Russia and between, for example, Moscow and Berlin (‘East Wind’), and in particular, between Russia’s Far Eastern ports of Nahodka and Vladivostok and the Finnish or Belarusian border, have been developed in recent years.³⁴

The shipping container story suggests that a relatively minor change in the sphere of technology may have far-reaching consequences, creating the ‘ground’ required for the emergence of a new global domain of political and economic action. If I now recall the earlier analogy about building and designing a house, this example could be considered to favour the ‘practical theorists’ who, in their explanations, put emphasis on “anchoring practices” rather than on plans drawn up for the purpose of changing the world. But more than that, the shipping container story is appropriate for introducing a set of problems which the Russian authorities encounter when formulating policies on the transport corridors.

I started this chapter with a quotation from Minister Frank’s speech where he drew a parallel between the ‘iron curtain’ and the technologies and practices

³¹ The Soviet railways were heavy users of containers but these were smaller than the current standard used in international cargo transportation. Westwood 2002, 121–123.

³² Cited in Rybczynski 2006.

³³ A new chapter in the story of container transportation opened in March 2003 when the company called Transcontainer was established on the basis of the former Ministry of Transport filial Transcontainer MPS Russia. Kommersant 18.3.2005; Baskakov 2006; Guseinov 2006; Generalov 2006; Izvestiya 26.1.2004.

³⁴ In 2005 there were 3,542 container block trains which carried 323 300 TEU. Baskakov 2006.

hampering the integration of Russia into the global, and in particular, European markets. I have discussed the end of the Cold War as an instance of the emergence of a new order inscribed in the shipping container narrative. However, I have not yet addressed the questions which Frank referred to in his speech as resulting from “ideological isolation”. This I will do by briefly discussing the lure of geopolitical explanations about the change in Russia’s relations with Europe.

8.3 The lure of geopolitical explanations

“Geopolitics”, as it is also understood in this study, “concerns permanent geographical realities and the way they interact with political life”.³⁵ British geographer Halford Mackinder’s infamous linkage of railway transport and the rising power of the “heart-land” helps in conceptualizing the conjunction between geography and politics. With the network of railways covering the vast Euro-Asian space, argued Mackinder, Russia was bound to become a pivot of history: the heartland. Writing on the eve of the opening of the trans-Siberian railway, Mackinder argued that:

A generation ago steam and the Suez Canal appeared to have increased the mobility of sea-power relatively to land-power. Railways acted chiefly as feeders to ocean-going commerce. But trans-continental railways are now transmuting the conditions of land-power, and nowhere can they have such effect as in the closed heart-land of Euro-Asia, in vast areas of which neither timber nor accessible stone was available for road-making.³⁶

His prediction about the increasing role of railway transport at the expense of ocean-going traffic was based upon the cost-time benefit he calculated that railways had over the fourfold handling of goods that shipping involved. Although later developments have shown that Mackinder was wrong about the prevalence of railways over sea transport, in his analysis he did locate the decisive point in the logistical chain: the time-consuming handling of cargo at ports and en route.³⁷

Mackinder’s juxtaposition of Russia as a pivot of the Eurasian heartland was something which Russian thinkers took to heart in the 1990s. Seeing Russia as the heir to Eurasia became a kind of psychological compensation for the break-up

³⁵ Friedman 2005, 6. See also e.g. Tuomi 1996; Tuathail 1997; Sloan 1999.

³⁶ Mackinder 1951, 41.

³⁷ Mackinder 1951, 41. For studies on Mackinder’s thesis see e.g. Tuathail 1992; Sloan 1999; Bassin and Aksenov 2006; Hauner 1990 explicitly on the significance of the railways.

of the Soviet empire.³⁸ The influx of a geopolitical mode of thinking into Russia in the early 1990s found fertile ground on which to develop. Russian political thinking has always been keen on explicating her geopolitical self-image, leading to approximations on the boundary between European culture and her Asiatic vastness. In the Russian discourse the East was seen both as an empty space waiting to be conquered by the Russian rulers and as something threatening, manifested in the fear of the ‘Yellow Peril’.³⁹

The most famous of the lines of thought advocating Russia’s turning to the East emerged in the midst of the Bolshevik revolution. The Russian emigrants who had fled to the West reinterpreted the meaning of the October Revolution as *Ishod k Vostoku*: a turn towards the East.⁴⁰ Even if they failed to gather momentum in the 1920s, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, their writings found new readership and were popularized for the purpose of creating a new self-understanding of Russia’s place in the world.⁴¹ This was pondered by seeking answers to questions like: Was Russia a unitary state or a multinational empire? Who belonged to the Near Abroad? What would be the content of Russia’s policy towards the former Soviet countries? Was the emphasis to be on economic cooperation or would the Russian language and the cultural-historical ties provide the amalgam for the new integration policies as well?⁴²

The appeal of Eurasianist explanations, as well as those of British geographer Mackinder in today’s Russia, and among practitioners of geopolitics, lies in the malleability of the “geographical formula” that is open to endless rearrangement and interpretative “spin”.⁴³ In the spirit of classical geopolitical discourse, Mackinder glances *over* territory, ascertaining how geography ‘dictates’ or ‘compels’ states to act in a particular way, and how ‘dominion’ over territory

³⁸ Bassin and Aksenov 2006; see also Tsygankov 2003.

³⁹ See e.g. Bassin 1991; see also Hauner 1990 on the discussion about Russian (non)responses to Mackinder’s thesis of Euro-Asia.

⁴⁰ Savitsky 1997; Trubetskoy 1991.

⁴¹ Eurasianist texts were collected and republished in Russia in the early 1990s together with commentaries and new interpretations. On the Eurasianist movement and the original writings of the famous Eurasianists of the 1920s, see e.g. Riasanovsky 1963; Halperin 1982; Liberman 1991; Ljuks 1993; Oittinen 1994; Hauner 1990; Fedotova 1995; Kerr 1995; Shlapentokh 1997; Pursiainen 1998. On Eurasianism and geopolitical lines of thinking in Russia in general see e.g. Panarin 1994; Dugin 1997; Juntunen 2003; Tsygankov 2003; Mäkinen 2008.

⁴² Furman 1996; Baranovsky 1997; Erickson 1999; Smith 1999; Kolosov and Turovsky 2001. On the idea of Russia, see e.g. Berdyaev 1947; Pursiainen 1997; Karppinen 2003; Karppinen 2006.

⁴³ Bassin and Aksenov 2006, 116; Buzan and Little 2001, 26–27; cf. Dalby 2005.

translates into power in international politics. In this view, state power can be 'held' or 'possessed', and certain regions or entire parts of globe are organized as trajectories of modern teleology where 'barbarian' is surpassed by 'civilized', the wild by tamed, myth by logos, accident by logos, 'eastern' by 'western'.⁴⁴

The striving for simplicity and the modelling of geographical reality into political necessity, especially in foreign policy analysis and the popular media, is accompanied by a critical approach that has sought new ways of formulating the thesis on the importance of geography in politics. Writers subscribing to critical geopolitics focus on the contingencies rather than the certainties: the emergence of 'placelessness', 'abstraction' of space, the 'ageographicality' of politics, or of 'non-places' existing out of sight of the global networks. What is common to this otherwise wide variety of ways to be critical about the tradition of geopolitical thinking is a shift towards the de-construction and contextualization of discourses on a particular policy or classical geopolitical writings in general.⁴⁵

The shift from classical to critical geopolitics can be described as a move whereby the relationship between geography and politics is seen, not just in terms of the container metaphor, but rather is told quietly, by way of the narrative about the container. The container metaphor has its origin in Newtonian physics and it represents, as Helen Couclelis puts it, "space as a neutral background against which the positions of objects can be pinpointed and their motions described".⁴⁶ This analogy served those who advocated the reading of international relations as a zero-sum game for power that could be held, possessed and balanced.⁴⁷ But it says very little, if anything, about the ways in which "geography makes a difference to what we experience as power and to how it is exercised".⁴⁸ In the words of John Allen:

Power as an outcome cannot and should not be "read off" from a resource base, regardless of its size and scope. Power in this sense is no more to be found "in" the apparatus of rule than sound is to be found "in" the wood of musical instruments. It is, as suggested, a relational effect, not a property of someone or some "thing".⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Kelly 2006; Agnew 1999; Dalby 2005; Marquard 1991, 72.

⁴⁵ Augé 1995; Forsberg 1996; O'Tuathail 1996; O'Tuathail 1998; Agnew 1998.

⁴⁶ Cited in Niemann 1998, 112.

⁴⁷ On the criticism of classical geopolitical thinking see e.g. Agnew 1999; Howarth 2006; Allen 2002; O'Tuathail 1997; on Realism in IR see e.g. Guzzini 2000; Rengger 2000.

⁴⁸ Allen 2003, 10–11; see also Scott 1998; Lefevbvre 2002; Castells 1996; Dicken 2003; Latour 1999; Latour 2000; Buzan, Jones and Little 1993; Giddens 1979, 80.

⁴⁹ Allen 2003, 5.

In other words, the institutionalization of patterns of global connections refers to “the ways in which global networks and relations become regularized and embedded in the practices and operations of the agencies (states, collectivities, households, individuals) in each social domain, from the cultural to the criminal”.⁵⁰

The shift in thinking about space as a domain of politics is captured by the *narrative* about the container. Here the focus is on the ways in which proximity or remoteness, presence or absence, are part of the discursive and everyday practices. Accordingly, the transport corridor can be thought of as a set of practices that makes use of the ‘interaction capacity’, that is, the existing infrastructure support, be it physical, regulative/legal or symbolic.

In the aforementioned speech, Minister Frank links the changes in this sphere to the sudden collapse of the Cold War world order, but he also hints at the more evolutionary logic of change which emerged in the practices and technologies of interaction. In the case of the latter, the practices and technologies are subject to regulative rules that have been agreed upon at the state or international level. In the former case, on the other hand, the change entails a shift in the way in which the transport corridors are *seen*. In other words, the change in the organizing principles (discursive level) and their criteria of rationality (‘causal aspect’) as argued in this study. The theoretical undercurrents of this formulation will be elaborated on below.

⁵⁰ Held et al. 1999, 19.

9 From a symbolic act to reality as a matter of fact

9.1 The power of iteration according to the formula 'X counts as Y in C'

9.1.1 *The construction of institutional facts*

As the recent study on trade logistics shows, traders value costs and the timeliness of logistic services but, above all, the overall reliability of the supply chain.⁵¹ These are, in other words, the basic variables in accordance with which a particular 'transport corridor' is considered orderly. Order, to borrow the words of international relations scholar Hedley Bull, is an arrangement or pattern that "is orderly in relation to some purpose"⁵². In his definition rules are:

General imperative principles which require or authorize prescribed classes of persons or groups to behave in prescribed ways. Order in any society is maintained not merely by a sense of common interests in creating order or avoiding disorder, but by rules which spell out the kind of behaviour that is orderly.⁵³

"These rules", continues Bull, "may have the status of law, or morality, or custom or etiquette, or simply of operating procedures or 'rules of the game'". The central point is that "rules are by themselves mere intellectual constructs". They can be changed, and they often change to reflect the interests of dominant groups. Bull lists eight functions that must be attained for rules to be socially effective: they must be made, communicated, administered, interpreted, enforced, legitimized, modified if the need arises, and protected against developments that would undermine the effective operation of the rules.⁵⁴

...the vast and changing corpus of rules and quasi-rules...provide the means whereby international society moves from the vague perception of a common interest to a clear conception of the kind of conduct it requires.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Arvis et al. 2007, 1.

⁵² The purposes or goals that he suggests are central to order in social life include life, truth and property. Bull 1995, 3-5.

⁵³ Bull 1995, 52.

⁵⁴ Bull 1995, 54.

⁵⁵ Bull 1995, 68.

The set of international agreements that regulate movement between the international and domestic spheres and within the sovereign territories were developed together with, and often in response to, advances in the sphere of technology development.⁵⁶ The three jurisdictional norms, part of which have their roots in the seventeenth century and have been effectively developed since the nineteenth century, cut across main international transport spheres (shipping, aviation industry, telecommunications and postal services). These norms are: the state's right of free access to international space (the freedom of the high seas and open skies), the right of innocent passage through another state's sovereign jurisdictional spheres, and the state's right to exclude foreign services and firms from its sovereign territories.⁵⁷ For example, the idea of sovereign air space is fairly recent and emerged (partly) in response to the developments in the aviation industry. Here, as in other spheres of transportation, the principle of sovereign autonomy over territory and the right of innocent passage, in the sense of the free flow of commerce, have had conflicting implications for certain policy issues, especially with regard to the Siberian overflight rights.⁵⁸

The *construction* of social reality in the Searlean sense presupposes epistemological realism and the metaphor of construction is used literally here. This approach is focused on the (re)production of constitutive rules by showing how conventional power is created/destroyed by the collective assignment of status-functions to phenomena, objects or events which, in their intrinsic features, are not *intentional*. In this framework, constitutive rules do not have ontological status; they do not answer the question of what *is* but are aimed at explaining *how* things are.

Searle delineates the following criteria that must be satisfied in order for an institutional fact to possess the attributes of a constitutive rule.⁵⁹ The imposition of collective intentionality is expressed in the formula X counts as Y in C where:

- 1) The Y term has to assign a new *status* that the object does not already have simply by virtue of satisfying the X term.

⁵⁶ Gruber 1999; Dicken 2003; Fujimura 2004; Steinberg and McDowell 2003.

⁵⁷ Zacher and Sutton 1996, 7.

⁵⁸ Britain was the first to declare sovereignty over adjacent airspace in 1911. Most European states followed suit and by 1914 there was a *de facto* norm of state sovereignty over air space. The right of innocent passage, as well as other aspects of jurisdiction were developed in the inter-war years, and formulated into a Convention on International Civil Aviation in 1944. The controversial issue in this Convention is the question concerning transit through sovereign state territory. Zacher and Sutton 1996, 91–93.

⁵⁹ Searle 1995, 44–45.

- 2) There has to be collective agreement, or at least acceptance, both in the imposition of that status on the thing (object or phenomenon) referred to by the X term and about the function that goes with that status.
- 3) The new status and its attendant functions have to be the sort of things that can be constituted by collective agreement or acceptance.
- 4) There must be continued collective acceptance or recognition of the validity of the assigned function; otherwise the function cannot be successfully performed.⁶⁰

The simplest cases of creating institutional facts according to this formula are those where the institutional structures already guarantee that certain lower-level actions count as higher-level institutional phenomena.⁶¹ The reason why status-functions are assigned in the first place, explains Searle, is that “the functional attribution introduces normativity”. The normativity is “a consequence of the fact that the functional attribution situates the causal facts within a presupposed teleology”. The attribution of function ascribes more than just causal functions because it presupposes the notion of purpose. Thus, with the imposition of meaning, a border is demarcated between the “world of observational facts” and the world of intention and meaning.⁶²

The possibility of dysfunction and malpractice, or more concretely, counterfeit money, all presuppose that there is a certain system of thought that defines limits of normativity.

Where the imposition of status function according to the formula becomes a matter of general policy, the formula acquires a normative status. It becomes a constitutive *rule*. This is shown by the fact that the general rule creates a possibility of abuses that could not exist without the rule, such as counterfeit money.⁶³

“A test for the presence of genuine institutional facts is whether or not we could codify the rules explicitly”. The more established the institution, the more likely it is that rules that constitute that institution, and regulate actions within the institution, have been codified into a law, or otherwise made explicit. The point is that “the practice of attaching a sense to an object according to the constitutive

⁶⁰ Searle 1995, 44.

⁶¹ Searle 1995, 55.

⁶² Kratochwil 1991, 21–26. See also Ruggie 1998, 90–91; Hacking 1999, 49–50; Tuomela and Patoluoto 1976, 182.

⁶³ Searle 1995, 48.

rules”, namely the iterations of the formula X counts as Y in C, “creates the very category of potential referents”.⁶⁴

The imposition of a new status function is “manifested only in actual transactions; hence, *our interest is not in the object but in the processes and events* where the functions are manifested”, writes Searle.⁶⁵ “What we think of as social *objects*, such as governments, money, and universities, are in fact just placeholders for patterns of *activities*.” In this way, the “whole operation of agentive functions and collective intentionality is a matter of ongoing activities and the creation of the possibility of more ongoing activities”. Furthermore, when the practice of imposing a status function becomes regularized and established, then it becomes a constitutive rule.⁶⁶ The question is, in which agentive context the new status is an institutional fact and when it remains merely a label. In the former case, “each use of the institution is a renewed expression of the commitment of the users to the institution”, whereas in the latter case the notion is used as a figure of speech – its use does not have consequences at the policy-implementation level.⁶⁷

What the aforementioned narrative about a container brings to the fore is the current weak capability of Russia to establish herself as a major trade route between Europe and Asia. This aspect is, however, omitted in the geopolitical envisioning of Russia as the heir to Eurasia. In the following chapter, I will advance this argument and explore the ways in which geography and politics are entangled in Russia. I will do that by looking at one rather specific and important aspect of spatial-political ordering: the classification of roads. It indicates the ways in which Russian space has been categorized in the Soviet era and what has changed in recent years. But ‘classification’ also serves as an example of the ‘construction of institutional reality’: the assignment of a new status and, with it, a new meaning. The chapter ends with an explication of the methodological tools (practical inference scheme) used in the empirical research analysis.

⁶⁴ Searle 1995, 53–87.

⁶⁵ Searle 1995, 57. Emphasis added.

⁶⁶ Searle 1995, 44–57; Searle 2003; Searle 1970.

⁶⁷ Searle 1995, 57.

9.1.2 *The classification of roads in the Soviet Union and in Russia*

This then is the Russian road. A strange world where several kilometres of decent surface are followed by tens of kilometres decimated by holes. To get from one village to another, three kilometres apart, one has to make a detour of forty kilometres.⁶⁸

The decree on the ‘classification of Russia’s road network’ came into force in late 1991. It divides Russian roads into three types: ‘public’, ‘private’, and ‘departmental’ (*vedomstvennyh*) roads. The status ‘public road’ covers a three-level hierarchy of roads: the ‘federal’, ‘regional’ and ‘local’. By definition, the ‘federal roads’ include highways (*magistralnye dorogi*) connecting Moscow with the capitals of the Newly Independent States (NIS), the capitals of the republics belonging to the Russian Federation, and the administrative centres of the regions (krais and oblasts) that were provided for international road transport linkages. The roads that run from the administrative centre of a region to an airport, sea or river port or to the railway stations are eligible for the status of federal road. Roads that are of ‘military or special importance’ may also have acquired this status.⁶⁹ The ‘regional’ roads comprise the bulk of the public roads and are the property of the regional administrations. The status of a ‘privately’ owned and ‘departmental’ road was used to refer to the roads that belonged to enterprises, organizations, institutions, kolhozes, sovhozes, (privatized) farming enterprises (*fermerskih hoziastv*) and other entities that ‘use roads for their technological, departmental or private needs’.⁷⁰

The current classification is a modified version of its Soviet counterpart. The roads which today have the status of ‘federal road’ were in the Soviet period regarded as being of an ‘all-union’ importance. This category included main roads (*magistral*), roads that were used in foreign trade, and roads used for leisure travel⁷¹ (*kurortnye dorogi*). Roads between the major towns also belonged to the first category. Roads in the second category connected regional centres (the Soviet

⁶⁸ Rossiiskaya Gazeta 26.7.1996.

⁶⁹ Government of RSFSR 1991. The text does not mention strategic military roads, although reference to “military and special importance” may legitimize federal budget financing. Miettinen 2006.

⁷⁰ Government of RSFSR 1991.

⁷¹ The identification of the roads designated for “leisure travel” was important during the Soviet years. This was aimed at regulating the routes used, for example, by foreign visitors to the USSR who were allowed to drive only on Intourist itineraries according to the tour purchased. See e.g. Thubron 1983.

republics, krais and oblasts), and also included roads between these centres and the major industrial sites, the local administrative centres as well as railway stations and inland waterway ports. Roads in the third category were of local importance as they connected the centres of local administration to sovhozes, machine-tractor stations, river piers, and to roads in the first and second category. This last category also included roads between 'separate settlements' and roads between kolhozes, as well as between kolhozes and the rest of the road network.⁷²

The classification, as suggested here, is a system of rules whereby the very description of what counts, for example, as a 'federal' road establishes conditions upon direct federal budget funding in the road construction. The first governmental programme for the development of the Russian road network was called the Roads of Russia. It was approved in late 1994. A year later it acquired the status of 'presidential programme', in connection with which the main building projects were short-listed. The priority projects to be completed by 2000 included the rebuilding of the federal road Belarus (Moscow–Berlin up to the Russian–Belarusian border), the federal road Russia and Skandinavia (the Moscow–St. Petersburg road up to the border with Finland) and the completion of the building of the road sections Chita–Khabarovsk and Omsk–Novosibirsk. Between the years 1995 and 2000, almost 34 thousand kilometres of public roads were built or reconstructed and 47 thousand kilometres of roads formerly belonging to the agricultural complex (*sel'hozproizvoditelei*) were brought into public use. The length of the 'federal road' network extended from 41 thousand kilometres to 46.3 thousand kilometres. What is more, the speed of travel was reported to have increased by 20 per cent along the major highways.⁷³

These efforts have been, in general, inadequate. Currently, the length of the federal road network is approximately fifty thousand kilometres, (5 per cent of the total length of the road network), and it accounts for about 45 to 50 per cent of the freight traffic.⁷⁴ At the same time, the category of 'regional road' comprises roughly 550 thousand kilometres of roads. The tension in the classification scheme arises from the discrepancy, on the one hand, between the insufficient length of the 'federal roads' allocated for the needs of international transportation, and the lack of means to improve the quality of the 'regional' and 'local' roads that

⁷² Vvedenskii, B.A. (et al., ed.) 1953, 131.

⁷³ Government of the RF 1994; Ukaz Prezidenta RF 6.12.1995; Izvestiya 14.12.1995; Rossiiskaya Gazeta 6.6.1996; Mintrans 2001a.

⁷⁴ Mintrans 2004d; Miettinen 2006; see also Larjavaara 1999, 57.

comprise the bulk of Russian roads, on the other.⁷⁵ The aim of the new road programme up to 2010 was to bring the set of regional and local level roads in conjunction with the highways and the ‘international transport corridors’.⁷⁶

Western analysts, such as World Bank economists, argue that as Russia’s agricultural and industrial sectors conform more closely to those of a market-oriented economy, the average size of consignments will decline, while the diversity of freight origins and destinations will increase. These changes will produce conditions that favour road rather than rail transport. As stated in a World Bank report: “the road infrastructure and services are now facing demands they were not designed to cope with”. The change is from a rail-dominated, state-managed system towards one with an emerging road transport sector that is driven by commercial interest.⁷⁷ An examination of the changes to the classification system will help in illuminating the last point.

The road classification system was modified once again in April 2006. In the new classification, the roads of ‘federal importance’ include roads connecting a capital of the Russian Federation to the capitals of the neighbouring countries (*sopredel’nyh gosudarstv*) and the roads between administrative centres of the subjects of the Federation. The status of ‘federal road’ is also assigned to roads connecting parts of the public road network with the largest transportation hubs (*uzlam*), and ‘international roads’ defined in accordance with international agreements (such as the E-roads). Accordingly, the “internationally significant (sea and river ports, airports and railway stations)” or other “objects of special federal significance” are eligible for the status of ‘federal road’.⁷⁸

The roads connecting kolhozes, sovhozes or river piers to the main route network are part of the ‘private’ realm and the decree does not categorically specify their relation to the common carrier network. In the public discussion, the words ‘kolhoz’, ‘sovhoz’ or ‘river pier’ have been replaced by the more abstract reference to “10 million”, sometimes “12 million” people that live in “28 thousand” or alternatively “39 thousand”, even “50 thousand” settlements without all-year-

⁷⁵ Mintrans 2004c, 5–6; Finansovye Izvestiya 4.12.2004; Rossiiskaya Gazeta 1.5.2004; Mietinen 2006.

⁷⁶ Mintrans 2001.

⁷⁷ The railways are still the major mode of surface transportation for about 86 per cent of the total volume of cargo transportation and they carry from 80 to 98 per cent of coal, coke, ore, ferrous metals, fertilizers and grain transportation. Eijbergen, B. (et al.) 2004, 2–4, 14.

⁷⁸ Government of the RF 2006a.

round connections to the main network.⁷⁹ The status of *internationally significant* or an *object of special federal significance* opens a new line of reasoning for the regional administrators to bargain for direct or indirect federal budget funding for the roads in their jurisdiction. The legislative framework that allows for private investments to the road construction (the so called toll-roads) was approved in late 2007.⁸⁰

From the viewpoint of the federal centre, the problem is that “each region would like to have an international transport corridor of its own”. As Minister Levitin emphasized in July 2005 “this is not possible”. “We have only one international transport corridor and that is Transsib”, continued Levitin, while clarifying that the trans-Siberian corridor comprises rail, road and air transportation connections.⁸¹ On the other hand, changes in the vocabulary, or actually the omission of words previously used, points to the fuzziness in the application of the rule defining a private road in Russia. The fuzziness in this case is a matter of playing with the formal, informal and unwritten rules of Russian politics.

9.2 Seeing things differently

9.2.1 *Picturing the change*

As argued in chapter 3 above, the advertisement for the Russian forwarding company the DGTV group conceptualizes the research hypothesis put forward in this study. In other words, the advertisement is meant *to picture* a theory about a change in thinking regarding transport in Russia. What was also suggested is that, analytically, the change in the background assumptions can be understood as a gestalt shift. Thomas Kuhn famously used the gestalt phenomenon in arguing that after a change in a paradigm, a sort of gestalt shift occurs and the scientist *sees* different things when *looking at* the same sort of objects.⁸² “Though the world does not change with a change of paradigm”, Kuhn wrote, “the scientist

⁷⁹ Rossiiskaya Gazeta 1.5.2004; Rossiiskaya Gazeta 24.7.1996; Mintrans 2001a; Stroitel'naya Gazeta 14.4.2006; Transport Rossii 17.4.2006; Levitin 2007.

⁸⁰ In autumn 2007 a public discussion got underway on the organizing of the state corporation (goskorporatsiya) in the sphere of road construction. The Ministry of Transport has been advocating this idea but as of early 2008 it had not acquired unanimous acceptance.

⁸¹ Radio Mayak 10.7.2005 12:14 MSK.

⁸² Kuhn 1996, 111–135.

afterwards works in a different world”.⁸³ Gestalt is an instance of ‘nesting’: the rearrangement of the ‘foreground’ and the ‘background’ into an ‘assembly’.⁸⁴

As argued by Sergei Prozorov, the change in Russian politics in the 1990s saw a “suspension of action because *everything has already happened*”. It was time out of serious politics ascribing to a teleological meta-narrative of ‘transition’, ‘modernity’, ‘capitalism’, and so forth. Politics lacked concrete ‘aboutness’: everything was changed but still nothing appeared to have undergone any substantive change. Conceptualization of the shift in politics as a ‘picture puzzle’ subscribes to a similar idea: a change that is of ‘messianic’ magnitude but still has a ‘minimal’ character.⁸⁵

The application of the picture puzzle is not suggested as an argument in favour of a ‘pictorial turn’ in the philosophy of social sciences.⁸⁶ Rather, I follow Susan Buck-Morss’ way of bringing the visual and the textual into contact with each other. Their interrelation is a “dependency of images mounted directly in the text”. The visual image is an inspiration for the writing of the text, rather than being an illustration of the text, which would not have been written in the first place if the image had not been found.⁸⁷ Bruno Zevi’s suggestion of how to study architecture helps in explicating the approach to language which is being applied here:

Anyone entering the study of architecture must understand that even though a plan may have abstract beauty on paper, the four facades may seem well-balanced and the total volume well-proportioned, the building itself may turn out to be poor architecture... to grasp space, to know how to see it, is the key to the understanding of building.⁸⁸

But what does *knowing how to see* entail? To know what is common to “that we call ‘games’”, Wittgenstein suggested that:

⁸³ Kuhn 1996, 44–45, 12; Von Wright 1999, 28–29; Wittgenstein 1999, §65.

⁸⁴ I follow here Iver Neumann’s definition of practices as a “nested phenomenon”. Neumann 2002; see also Schatzki, Knorr Cetina and Von Savigny 2001.

⁸⁵ Prozorov 2006a, 12–13; cf. Yurchak 2003.

⁸⁶ Mitchell argues for a ‘pictorial turn’, and following Wittgenstein’s ‘linguistic turn’ hints at a “grammar of vision”: the language game employed in things like interpretations, descriptive reports, and exclamations prompted by visual experiences. Mitchell 1995, 42–51. See also Möller 2007; Usvamaa-Routila 2007.

⁸⁷ She refers back to Walter Benjamin who, in her view, worked that way too. Buck-Morss 2002a, 326; See also Buck-Morss 1989; Buck-Morss 2002b; Buck-Morss 2005. For a similar kind of approach see e.g. Boym 2001.

⁸⁸ Zevi 1993, 23.

Don't say: There *must* be something common, or they would not be called "games" – but *look and see* whether there is anything common to all. – For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to *all*, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that. To repeat: don't think, but look!⁸⁹

I suggest that the *façade* is looked at, but not as something that restricts us from seeing what is hidden behind it, but as a structure that supports the building. The meaning of policy (or lack of meaning) is not something that is hidden behind the façade, but which can be ascertained by studying changes in the background assumptions that "would alter the way the façade of the house looks to us".⁹⁰ The point is, as Fierke has argued, that "humans do reason but this is less a reflection of an objective world – objective as independent of human meaning – than a part of our grammar for operating in *different types* of social or political contexts. From this perspective, it is important to analyze what logics are embedded in the grammar of a context, rather than compare an abstracted logic with the world".⁹¹

The notion of a façade is intended here as a reference to later Wittgenstein and his thesis that "natural language" could not be reached by going deep into the language but, on the contrary, was right on the surface in the everyday use of language. Wittgenstein, although keen on studying multistable images (he uses the example of the duck-rabbit), was concerned about the power of images to "hold the mind in the paralysis of misleading analogy".⁹² Fierke summarizes the shift from the earlier Wittgenstein (*Tractatus*) and understanding of "language as a picture", to his later period (*Philosophical Investigations*); the understanding of language use as analogous with making moves in a game. In the "transition from the metaphor of the picture to the game, that which was frozen in place begins to move. The static image of a chessboard becomes a game in process". With this move, the focus is shifted from a static image to "the structure of rules underpinning the game".⁹³

⁸⁹ Wittgenstein 1953, §66. See also Hollis and Smith 2003, 177; Guzzini 2004, 536; Fierke 2002; Margolis 1989.

⁹⁰ Searle 1980, 232. See also Kuhn 1996.

⁹¹ Fierke 2002, 346.

⁹² Mitchell 1995, 42–51; Wittgenstein 1953, II xi; cf. Searle 1983, 51.

⁹³ Fierke 2002.

9.2.2 *Playing with the formal, informal and unwritten rules of Russian politics*

The primary challenge of analysis is to locate a shift from one logic to another: a change that is inherent in the very idea of politics as a language game.⁹⁴ The games are instances of institutions, and the logic of playing according to the rules of one particular game rather than another is a feature of “family resemblances”. These are a “complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail”.⁹⁵ “The point is”, argues David Bloor, “that rules are socially constituted, where the manner of constitution can be identified in terms of self-referential processes. The very ontology of a rule is social and grounded in patterns of interaction”. In this way, “the self-referential analysis of institutions does not undermine the practicality of our knowledge, but describes a precondition of it”.⁹⁶ Searle expresses the same idea by saying that:

The semantic structure of a language may be regarded as a conventional realization of a series of sets of underlying constitutive rules, and that speech acts are acts characteristically performed by uttering expressions in accordance with these sets of constitutive rules.⁹⁷

What speaking language appropriately means is not that we would follow those rules consciously or unconsciously. Rather, a person is *chez lui* in society because he has developed a set of capacities and abilities that correspond with a socially created normative component of the institutional structure. “We evolve a set of dispositions”, explains Searle “that are sensitive to the rule structure” of the phenomenon in question.⁹⁸

First (the causal level) the person behaves the way he does, because he has a structure that disposes him to behave that way; and second (the functional level) he has come to be disposed to behave that way, because that’s the way that conforms to the rules of the institution.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Fierke 2002, 350. See also Schatzki 2001, 42–43; Swindler 2001, 76, 87.

⁹⁵ Wittgenstein 1953, §66.

⁹⁶ Bloor 2002, 104.

⁹⁷ Searle 1970, 37.

⁹⁸ Searle 1995, 93; Searle 1983, x; Searle 2002, 142, 150–51; on rule following, see also Bloor 2002.

⁹⁹ Searle 1995, 144.

It is this particular “form of life”, to use Wittgenstein’s term, or the Background, as Searle calls it, that enables us to understand literal meanings and against which the semantic content of utterances functions.¹⁰⁰ The way in which rules are emergent in the form of action does not exclude the notion of the accidental, that is, a sense in which the language game is not a pre-ordered structure but in itself something unpredictable. “I mean”, writes Wittgenstein, “it is not based on grounds...it is there – like our life”. According to Joseph Margolis’ interpretation, the rules and practices of actual societies are conceptually symbiotic, not hierarchically linked, and not universalizable in any transhistorical way. “The sense in which rules, practices, and “agreement” regarding the rules and practices are “grounded” in the forms of life is not cognitively definable nor confirmable, but signifies roughly the actual viability and survival of a human society insofar as such survival depends upon (is mediated by) such effective ‘agreement’”.¹⁰¹

Applying similar conceptual terminology to Russian politics, Alena Ledeneva has suggested that the way in which Russia works is a combination of formal and informal rules and unwritten rules that bring the two together. The problem is, as Ledeneva nicely puts it, that “it is in the nature of unwritten rules to stay unwritten”.¹⁰² “Reliance on unwritten rules”, writes Ledeneva, “is an outcome of the inefficiency of formal rules and the mechanism for enforcing them, on the one hand; and people’s lack of respect for formal rules and their exploitative attitude towards formal institutions on the other”.¹⁰³ Appropriate action requires careful manoeuvres whereby *not* “playing by the formal rules” of the game is compatible with playing by the unwritten rules. Transparency of the rules of the game cannot, therefore, be taken as a basic point of departure. On the other hand, the use of unwritten rules should not be seen simply as a negative phenomenon. In contrast to deeply rooted “primordial” informal institutions, Kellee S. Tsai has identified adaptive informal institutions that represent “creative responses to formal institutional environments that actors find too constraining”.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Searle 1983, 150.

¹⁰¹ Margolis 1989, 342–348. Searle comes to a similar conclusion; see Searle 1995, 145–147.

¹⁰² Ledeneva 2001, 17. See also North 1991; Gustafson 1999; Gaddy and Ickes 2002; Hanson 2006, 136–137. For the distinction between informal and formal rules in the IR see e.g. Lang, Rengger and Walker 2006.

¹⁰³ Ledeneva 2001, 6–9; Derluguian 2003, 2.

¹⁰⁴ As explained by one of the loans-for-shares scam participants, Konstantin Kagalovsky, the whole point was to ensure that the law banning foreign participation was “intentionally vague and thus open to multiple interpretations”. This shifted the game from a merely legal question into a political one: it was a battle that would be waged in “the murky swamp of Russian legislation” where “you can’t simply hire lawyers (and have them decide the issue)”.

The point is that the line between what is rational and what might be termed irrational is not a straight line but a zigzag¹⁰⁵, emergent in the way in which unwritten, formal and informal rules are woven together in the unsystematizable complex of actual societal life. The metaphor of the pendulum, oscillating between two extreme positions is usually used to convey the sense of abrupt and contradictory shifts in Russian politics. The *zigzagging* refers to that same thing, but it points to the creativity of the use of language in a particular situation.

To know when zig turns into zag is a “semi-instinctive knowledge” that no amount of theoretical understanding can compensate for, writes Isaiah Berlin in his essay first published in 1952.¹⁰⁶ The zigzag metaphor in this sense is fundamental in understanding the ‘ground’ or, as Berlin says, “the general line” upon which the viability of the Soviet system rested. Berlin was careful to point out that the symbiosis in this case was of a peculiar sort. The “general line” to which the zigzag path referred was grounded in an “artificial dialectic” – originally conceived by Stalin – and pursued to avoid extreme oscillations of too much happiness and freedom, or too much panic and despair, and thus a situation in which the Soviet population might become unruly or insufficiently productive.¹⁰⁷ Learning to walk along that zigzag path and to represent it as if it were a straight line was the most precious skill the Soviet citizen could possess. To do this required certain arrangements, a web of connections and knowledge of non-formal and unwritten rules and practices that were constitutive of the Soviet system. The point made by Berlin was that these arrangements made sense and appeared to be normal against the background of the general line.¹⁰⁸

Freeland 2005, 176; Tsai 2006, 118. On informal rules in connection with the Yukos affair see e.g. Hanson and Teague 2005.

¹⁰⁵ Lilia Shevtsova has used this metaphor to describe the oscillations of Russia’s pro-western foreign policy under President Putin. Shevtsova 2005, 322. See also Mau 2001, 69; Benjamin 1986, 47, 66–67; Berlin 2004.

¹⁰⁶ Berlin refers here to the following story: There once was a man who had taken employment as a steward on a seagoing ship. It was explained to him that, in order to avoid breaking plates when the ship was rocking in heavy weather, he must not walk in a straight line, but try to move in a zigzag manner: this was what experienced seamen did. The man said that he understood. Bad weather duly came, and soon there was a terrible sound of breaking plates as the steward and his load crashed to the ground. He was asked why he had not followed the instructions. “I did”, he said. “I did as I was told. But when I zigged the ship zagged, and when I zagged the ship zigged”. Berlin 2004, 98.

¹⁰⁷ Berlin 2004, 114–117.

¹⁰⁸ On Stalin and the paradigm shift in discourse, see Susiluoto 1982; Yurchack 2006; for implementation of the practice of “speaking Bolshevik”, see Kotkin 1997, 220; on the influences Stalin’s dialectic had on Soviet economic thinking, see Sutela 1984. Subsequently, a similar point was made by Katherine Stoner-Weiss in connection with the post-Soviet Russian economic reforms. Stoner-Weiss 2006.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the figure of the “general line” that composed the ‘foreground’ of Soviet politics receded into the ‘background’. This shift is similar to what we perceive when we look at picture puzzles. What we see are two separate and completely different images that cannot be understood separately from each other. In a similar way, the contours of post-Soviet Russian politics emerge against the background of Soviet politics. But in this case, the shift is emergent in the way in which the words ‘democracy’, ‘market economy’, ‘competitiveness’ and the ‘international transport corridor’, are actualized and used in the course of policy-making in Russia.

In conclusion, it should be noted that we often come to know about the Background primarily in terms of our reactions rather than through cognition. This is particularly true when our reactions fail us: when our presumptions about how things are do not coincide with reality. It is therefore our common-sense reactions that provide access to the Background. Furthermore, since these reactions are embedded in one’s own common-sense categories of thinking, they act as an unintentional barrier to our attempts to understand another culture or period of time. As counter-intuitive as it may sound, the fact that the “stock of knowledge” is not even truly common to members of a language community provides the basis for a beginner to proceed.¹⁰⁹ For although there exists this particular “semi-instinctive knowledge” about the ‘zig and the zag’ of Russian politics to which the foreign analyst rarely has primary access, the path emerging as a result of the twists and turns is in itself a “stock of knowledge” on how to proceed. In this study, it is approached by means of a practical inference scheme that is discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

9.3 Practical reasoning and collective action explanations

Searle’s formula ‘X counts as Y in C’ is applied here in two ways. First, the formula is used as an analytical tool (the syntagmatic dimension) in the identification of reasoning for a policy (a semantic range of agentive contexts $c_1, c_2, c_3 \dots c_n$). Second, it is applied on the aggregate level of analysis that allows us to open up the discursive (paradigmatic) dimension of the reasoning for a policy. The schema of practical inference is applied here to reconstruct what the ‘count as’ locution in a particular context does. I will follow a schema of practical inference formulated by the philosopher Henrik von Wright, which goes as follows:

¹⁰⁹ Fotion 2000, 122; Searle 1983, 155; Hanks 1996, 101, 129; see also Winch 1987.

A intends to bring about *p*.
A considers that he cannot bring about *p* unless he does *a*.
Therefore A sets himself to do *a*.¹¹⁰

The central tenet of this schema is that intention alone will not bring about a certain thing but a “further factor is required to make the causal mechanism operative”. This is “an opinion, belief or insight that reaching the object of intention requires a specific kind of behaviour”. The schema of practical inference formulated by von Wright states a certain *pattern* of inference.¹¹¹

The starting point or major premise of the (practical) syllogism mentions some wanted thing or end of action: the minor premise relates some action to this thing, *roughly* as a means to the end; the conclusion, finally, consists in the use of this means to secure that end. Thus, as in a theoretical inference the affirmation of the premises leads of necessity to the affirmation of the conclusion, in a practical inference assent of the premises entails action in accordance with them.¹¹²

Von Wright stresses, in fact long before Searle, the importance of the contingency of the premises and the conclusion in the practical reasoning.¹¹³ The central problem is how to ascertain a tie (or gap) between cognition (prior intention) and volition (the intention-in-action)? How can we verify that intention to do something is linked with an actual attempt to try to do it? I will not go deeper

¹¹⁰ Von Wright 1971, 96.

¹¹¹ Von Wright 1971, 96–97; Martin 1976, 328.

¹¹² Von Wright 1971, 27. Cited in Martin 1976, 327.

¹¹³ In the Classical Model, practical reasoning is a matter of figuring out how best to satisfy the set of desires and values that the agent is believed to have in the first place. At the heart of the Classical Model, as Searle calls it, is Hume’s statement that “reason is and ought to be the slave of the passions”. Searle challenges the Classical Model of rationality by insisting that there is no causal link between beliefs or desires and action. On the contrary, the gap between the two is essential in understanding how rationality operates. “The operation of rationality presupposes”, writes Searle, “that there is a gap between the set of intentional states on the basis of which I make my decision, and the actual making of the decision”. A central point of Searle’s theory is that it is only irrational actions that tend to be directly caused by beliefs and desires – these are the type conducted, for example, by a person in the grip of an obsession or addiction. In most cases of rational action we presuppose that the antecedent set of beliefs and desires is not causally sufficient to determine the action. The traditional name for this gap is ‘free will’. Rationality operates, and is in fact possible, only where one has a choice among various rational as well as irrational options. Searle distinguishes three ‘gaps’ in all, the first being between deliberations and prior intentions; the second being between the prior intention and the intention-in-action, and the third the gap in the structure of temporally extended intentions-in-action. The last point simply means that doing something requires that the person initiating an action retains the intention-in-action during the whole act. Searle 2001, 13–14, 50; see for comparison Von Wright 1971, 110–115.

into this discussion but rather suggest a solution that seems plausible in terms of my research problem.¹¹⁴

Von Wright does not exclude the possibility that A's choice to do *a* rather than *b* is entirely fortuitous. He considers different options to relax the schema, an elaboration which Searle takes further, and suggests that the second premise should be modified by saying "the best way, all things considered, is (to do *a*)". But this, as Searle himself notes, leads to further ambiguities rather than solving them.¹¹⁵ Von Wright addresses the same point Searle makes later but argues that cognitive (first premise) and volitional (second premise) aspects cannot be completely separated, but that the first premise necessarily exhibits both aspects. The second premise is not futile for it says that A has *some* idea what should be done in order to bring about *p*, not that doing something else would not be excluded. Both von Wright and Searle share the view that the premises and conclusion are contingent – the tie between them (termed 'gap' by Searle) is contingent – it is empirically not logically true.¹¹⁶ But where Searle sought to find a solution to this problem of contingency by elaborating on different types of intentionality-in-action (direction of fit), von Wright proposes a slightly different interpretation of the intentionality in question. He argues that intentionality has no 'location' outside or behind the behaviour:

The behaviour's intentionality is its *place* in a story about the agent. Behaviour gets its intentional character from being *seen* by the agent himself or by an outside observer in a wider perspective, from being *set* in a context of aims and cognitions. This is what happens when we construe a practical inference to match it, as premises match a given conclusion.¹¹⁷

Although as von Wright himself points out, this description might be misleading, he goes on to compare intentional behaviour to the use of language, saying that both are gestures; "the understanding of action presupposes a community of institutions and practices and technological equipment into which one has been introduced by learning and training". Rex Martin has developed these ideas further on the basis of the Wittgensteinian notion of the language game. He suggests that von Wright's formulation of the scheme was open to a Wittgensteinian solution. The main difference between the two, according to Martin, was that von Wright

¹¹⁴ See e.g. Razz 1978.

¹¹⁵ Searle 2001, 36–39.

¹¹⁶ Von Wright 1971, 96–107.

¹¹⁷ Von Wright 1971, 115.

wanted to keep the distinction between the empirical and the logical relatively rigid, whereas Wittgenstein was inclined to relax this tie.¹¹⁸ Again, I will refrain from going into detail here, opting instead to suggest why the solution proposed by Martin is plausible in terms of this study.

In reconstructing the practical reasoning for a particular policy, I will focus on articulated reasons that put the meaning of the action *in a wider perspective* by way of inter-textual analysis. The logical core of von Wright's notion of entailment, says Martin, is "not in the description of action but, rather, in its being *intentional* under that description". In the words of von Wright:

What happened to our "practical inference" was ... that we turned it into a set of conditions under which the conduct of an agent has to be interpreted or understood in a certain way, *viz.* as the doing of A or as aiming at this result. The premises of the practical inference became the description of a teleological perspective in which conduct is being understood as intentional.¹¹⁹

Therefore, in fact, the conclusion to the practical inference is not 'the agent does A' but, rather, suggests Martin, that his doing A is *intentional*. This shift is significant, argues Martin, because it allows us to pin-point the 'object of intention' in the action. In other words, the schema *characterizes* the intentionality involved: the agent has done A in order to achieve E.

The crux of the argument Martin puts forward is that the schema is a "conception of how actions happen".¹²⁰ This derives from the Wittgensteinian solution where "action-explanations constitute a language-game (Sprachspiel) and the schema belongs to the foundation (Fundament or Grund) of that game... it provides a paradigm or model of how we conceive actions to happen". The foundation, in accordance with Wittgenstein's analogy of a game, is "the foundation that sets the kind of moves one can make: it is the form of that world, the limit of that particular game". It follows from this that "to know is to make a move in such a game. Knowing involves grounds: something proves something else, or provides an appropriate setting or serves as evidence for it". Based on this, Martin argues that:

A particular practical inference has its proper grounds, but this business of citing grounds cannot go on forever. There is an end point which provides grounds but is not itself grounded. This is the difference between a

¹¹⁸ Martin 1976, 354.

¹¹⁹ Martin 1976, 346.

¹²⁰ Martin 1976, 349.

particular practical inference and the schema itself. The ground for saying that *this* intention could explain *that* action is the schema. We could *know* that a particular intention explains a particular action but we could not, if this is the very game-form of action-explanations, be said to know that intentions explain actions. This, rather, is the object of the language-game of explaining; it is *what* we do in the game, not one of the things that we do.¹²¹

Thus, Martin concludes that “these game-forms constitute the nature of our certainty: our understanding *within* a particular universe of discourse”. The principles of arriving in understanding are *in* the explanatory practices and individual knowledge claims (rather than in the collective unconscious or somewhere in Plato’s real) and change in these organizing principles occurs through changes in our *praxis*. Thus, there is a ‘way of doing things’ that is characteristic of *praxis* in that particular discourse.¹²² The *description* of the groundform of a language-game proceeds, as explained by Martin:

By reasoned argument to a conclusion respecting *what* has been assumed in that particular game... There is no fact, other than the soundness of the argument involved, that could determine the statement to be true or false. At best we can be said to have fixed, by reasoning, upon that which is taken as certain in a particular language-game.¹²³

The practical inference scheme states a groundform of a language-game, which is that of explaining actions.¹²⁴ The description of this language-game, as suggested above, allows us to arrive at *that which is taken as certain* in that particular setting. “It is a self-contained game in which reference to matters that fulfill the conditions of the “if...” part of the basic schema give us *sufficient* grounds to say “then the agent does A” (the action specified)”.¹²⁵

In this way we may establish the *way to do things with words*, and the rules of the game by which things get done. In a non-systematic, pro-habitual sense speech act theory provides the means of doing this. This is because it is positioned at the crossroads of (the formal logic of) practical reasoning and practices of language use, and thus provides a means of inquiry into not only what is meant

¹²¹ Martin 1976, 351.

¹²² Martin 1976, 353.

¹²³ Martin 1976, 353. Emphasis in original.

¹²⁴ Martin 1976, 354.

¹²⁵ Martin 1976, 358. Cf. Searle 1998; Searle 1983.

by an utterance, but even more importantly, what is done with it at that particular moment, under those aspects, and in that particular context.

By reconstructing the set of statements that define what counts as a ‘pan-European’/‘international transport corridor’ we may distinguish the logic in which the premises of an argument for the development of ‘international transport corridors’ are tied with the authorized (in the sense of policy recommendation) actions. The logic in this case is the logic of playing the game of Russian politics and this analysis is geared to explaining the ‘causal aspects’ giving the game the form it has. In this way we may open a ‘policy horizon’, that is, a range of possibilities that comprise a ‘world’ of purposeful actions in the given framework.

III

The Foreground: The Russian Transport Corridor



Proezda: A passage through a courtyard, Odessa, Ukraine, June 2003. Photograph by the author.¹

¹ The green garage visible behind the white building closes off the passage through the courtyard. Thus the text passage written on the wall is anecdotal rather than informative. The same irony also applies to the text exit to metro written on the door of the same building.

10 The emergence of the discussion on transport corridors in Russia

10.1 The formulation of a federal policy on the corridors

I will begin my empirical research analysis by reconstructing the reasoning by way of which the creation of the ‘pan-European transport corridors’ was addressed in the context of Russian politics (Figure 1, phases 0 and 1). In this section I will firstly take a look at the set of authoritative statements by which the new status of ‘international transport corridor’ was established as a part of the federal policy on transport infrastructure modernization. The purpose is to reconstruct the aims and goals of the policy in Russia and also to introduce the reader to the way of addressing the subject of the corridors in Russia. After this, I will briefly discuss the creation of the ‘pan-European transport corridors’ and explore in more detail the establishment of ‘pan-European transport corridor IX’. By and large, it is my initial aim to establish the situation in which the new ‘semantic currency’ was used in Russia. In section five I will return to this question in more detail and reconstruct the way it was used in the context of Russian politics.

At the federal agentive level of policy-making, the notion of the ‘international transport corridor’ was articulated roughly between the years 1997 and 2000. The three successive texts outlining the policy include: ‘the concept of formulation and development of international transport corridors in Russia’, ‘the formulation and development of international transport corridors in the territory of Russia’ and lastly, ‘the formulation and development of international transport corridors in the territory of Russia’.² In December 2001, the Russian government accepted a Federal Target Programme titled ‘The Modernization of the Russian Transport

² I have not been able to locate the first draft prepared by the Ministry of Transport in spring 1998. The later versions of the same text were published. In 2001 a text written by V.I. Arsenov, A.I. Zaboev, E.M. Mahlin, A.V. Nesnov, and V.A. Sabolin working at the NTsKTP was published in the magazine *Transport Business in Russia*. It is largely the same text that was discussed in the government meeting on September 7, 2000 and that later appeared as the sub-programme of the FTP ‘Modernization of Transport System of Russia’. The head of the scientific-centre complex transport problems at the Ministry of Transport (NTsKTP), Vyacheslav Arsenov, confirmed this connection in an article published in April 2001 in the Ministry of Transport newspaper *Transport Rossii*. In the following I will refer to the version published in the journal *Transport Business in Russia*. Arsenov et al. 2001; Arsenov 2001.

System' that included a sub-programme called 'international transport corridors'.³ This programme was elaborated on in the above-mentioned three texts.

The text titled *The main directions of the creation and development of the international transport corridors on the territory of the Russian Federation* was the first publicly accessible and formally authorized document on the development of transport corridors in Russia. It was discussed and accepted at the meeting of the Russian government on September 7, 2000.⁴ Introducing the document, Minister of Transport Sergei Frank stated that in the government policy document 'The main directions of social-economic policy on the long-term perspective', "the development of transport infrastructure is mentioned as a government priority. And the main means to realize this goal is to create a system of international transport corridors".⁵ Having thus introduced the Ministry position on the issue, Minister Frank explained why the Russian government should adopt the new notion of the 'international transport corridor' as the locus of its transport policy. He pointed out that, in fact, not just Russian authorities, but the international community at large considers the development of 'international transport corridors' in the territory of Russia as an important policy objective.

Minister Frank explicitly referred to the Second International Euro-Asian Transport Conference that was to take place five days later in St. Petersburg. During the preparations for the conference "we became convinced", said Minister Frank, "that the world is ready to recognize Russia's leading role as a Euro-Asian transit country". In order to make use of this (recognition), the government should confirm its readiness to "create an efficient transport bridge between Europe and Asia", he added. But, as the argument continues: "for the time being Russia uses its massive transit potential poorly". This is because Russia lacks a consistent policy on how to take advantage of its favourable geographical position.⁶

³ The sub-programme was written in cooperation with NTsKTP (Scientific Centre of Complex Transport Problems at the Ministry of Transport of Russia) experts and experts from other transport and infrastructure planning institutes. Other materials that provided a basis for the work included the declarations of 'all-European' and 'international Euro-Asian' conferences (1994, 1997, 1998, 2000); materials from UN/ECE working groups on transport; materials from other sub-programmes of the FTP 'Modernization of Russian Transport System'; materials from working committees of the pan-European transport corridors 1, 2, and 9; technical studies and business plans, as well as other studies conducted by NTsKTP or other participating institutes. Mintrans 2001b, 11–12.

⁴ Other topics discussed during the meeting included the energy supply of the autumn-winter period 2000–2001, the simplification of the import customs tariffs, changes in the status of the Ministry of Antimonopoly Politics, and the allocation of funding for the Saratov oblast from the federal reserve fund.

⁵ Frank 2000d.

⁶ Frank 2000d.

The formulation of a consistent, *federal* policy on the ‘international transport corridors’ was considered timely because:

The group of countries, united in international alliances and supported by the EU and international organizations, have initiated several big international projects aimed at directing Eurasian trade flows around Russia.⁷

The text highlighted the need for the government to act by making it known that the realization of these projects may “adversely affect” not just the economy of the country but its national security as well.⁸ Minister Frank’s speech at the Security Council earlier in the spring of 2000 added to what was left unsaid in the official text. The “big international project” referred to the new Europe-Caucasus-Asia transport corridor TRACECA officially portrayed as “a renaissance of the Silk Road”.⁹ The “latitudinal transit corridor” would help to redirect trade flows between Europe and the Black Sea and the Central Asian countries around Russia. In this situation, Minister Frank outlined three policy options for Russia. Complete withdrawal from the cooperation or full participation in it were not considered plausible forms of action. Rather, Frank proposed that Russia should apply for observer status. This would give Russia access to information concerning the project which, from this standpoint, would make it easier to draw the attention of others (Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan in particular were mentioned) to Russia’s initiatives in this sphere.¹⁰

The point subsequently made by Frank at the government meeting was that the coordination of the work of the transport ministries in Russia (meaning the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of Railways) was no longer adequate. “The development of Russian international transport corridors requires continuous support by means of foreign policy”, stated Frank. He listed several practical means to further the interests of the state including: “operative use of border-crossing formalities”, “optimization of through traffic rates”, and support from the power ministries to enhance the security of the transport process.¹¹

The development of the ‘international transport corridors’ would signal a step in the right direction. As Frank argued, the government should approve the

⁷ Government of the RF 2000a.

⁸ Government of the RF 2000a.

⁹ Traceca 2002, 2.

¹⁰ Frank 2000c.

¹¹ Frank 2000d.

document prepared for the meeting by his Ministry and also charge the Ministry, together with the Ministry of Railways, with the task of preparing an appropriate state programme that would outline Russia's policy on the 'international transport corridors' and the transport network modernization in general.¹²

10.2 The corridors as a new aspect of Russia's economic policy

The government meeting on September 7, 2000 is a plausible starting point for further inquiry because by virtue of being an institutional fact itself, ('government in session') it had the required authority to create new institutional facts. In accordance with Russian legislation, the 'government in session' was entitled to authorize the Ministries of Transport and Railways to formulate the Federal Target programme dubbed 'the Modernization of the Russian Transport System'.¹³

The session duly produced two definite results. First, the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of Railways acquired the official approval to draw up guidelines for the programme on the modernization of the transport and infrastructure system. This process eventually culminated in government approval of the Federal Target Programme *the Modernization of Russia's Transport System 2002–2010* on December 5, 2001.¹⁴ By giving the document its seal of approval, the Russian government, in principle, gave its consent to the allocation of 600 billion roubles between the years 2001 and 2010 for the development of 'international transport corridors' in Russia. It also provided guidelines on the way in which the budget (and non-budget) funding for the corridors (and the infrastructure modernization in general) should be spent. In the sub-programme on 'international transport corridors' the existing texts on the corridors were elaborated on. The sub-programme also defined the criteria for choosing the particular corridor routes and described the list of investment projects within the corridors.¹⁵

¹² Frank 2000d.

¹³ Later a special committee was charged with the task of observing the implementation of the modernization programme.

¹⁴ The Russian government authorized Mintrans and the Ministry of Railways to draw up a detailed modernization programme on transport with the governmental directive No 232-p on 16.2.2001. The programme was finally approved on 5 December 2001. The programme had a 'federal status', which meant that it was entitled to direct the budget funding. The available financing for the modernization programme is decided separately for each year. Government of the RF 2001a; Government of the RF 2001b.

¹⁵ Mintrans 2001b.

Thus, the formal acceptance of the ‘international transport corridor’ concept was an important *precondition* for it to be *used as a frame* for federal-level policies on transport and infrastructure development. This is what Searle means when he writes that “the practice of attaching a sense to an object according to the constitutive rules creates the very category of potential referents”.¹⁶

The approval of the Federal Target Programme *the Modernization of Russia’s Transport System 2002–2010* consolidated the use of the new title ‘international transport corridor’ in the government policy on transport development.¹⁷ Thus, ever since 2002 the federal budget has included a special category ‘Federal Target Programme: the Modernization of the Russian Transport System until 2010’. A cursory glance at the federal budget confirms that the new status of ‘international transport corridor’ was included in the budget *after* it was accepted by the above-mentioned government session. In the federal budget approved on December 27, 2000 over 8 million roubles was allocated to the reconstruction and construction of federal highways “in the framework of the development of international and inter-regional transport corridors and the main transport junctions”.¹⁸

The programme implementation is envisaged to take place in two stages. In the first stage, from 2002 until 2005, the development of the transport system would be oriented towards improving the existing facilities and eliminating “bottlenecks”. During the second stage, from 2006 until 2010, the accelerated development of the transport system should result in a significant improvement in the efficiency and quality of the transport services. According to the plan, the total amount of investments during the programme period will amount to 4.6 trillion roubles, as estimated in 2001, over half of which would be derived from non-budget sources.¹⁹

The decision to develop ‘international transport corridors’ in Russia was widely reported in the Russian media. As reported by the main Russian television channel, ORT, the active development of international transport corridors had duly become “a new aspect of Russian economic policy”.²⁰ The redefinition of federal priorities in the transport sphere emerged in early 2000, at a time when Russia was entering a new phase of its macroeconomic environment after the economic crisis that hit the country in August 1998. The positive conjuncture of

¹⁶ Searle 1995, 75.

¹⁷ Government of the RF 2001b.

¹⁸ Government of the RF 2001b; Government of the RF 2001c; Government of the RF 2002b.

¹⁹ Mintrans 2001b; Transport Rossii 4.–10.10.2002.

²⁰ Telekanal ORT Novosti 7.9.2000 15:44 MSK.

the high world energy prices was the main engine of economic growth in Russia, and one that would last for years to come.

A good starting point for further analysis is the interview with Prime Minister Mihail Kasyanov which was broadcast on ORT after the government meeting on September 7, 2000. It conveys the way in which the corridors were publicly addressed at the time and also the way in which the development of the corridors was presented in answer to certain questions.

PRESENTER: What other questions were raised?

CORRESPONDENT: One more question about today's governmental session concerning the transport corridors on Russian territory, which make use of the country's advantageous geographical position. This is what the head of government had to say on this issue.

MIKHAIL KASYANOV: Many countries receive a great deal of money from transit, and our country could receive more than the minimal amount she is currently receiving, due to the opportunities afforded by her geography. In addition, this (the development of the corridors) will bring investments and economic development to those regions where the transport corridors are located. Our international partners have shown interest in such projects. Concrete plans exist and we are examining them.

CORRESPONDENT: Apparently, the issue also concerns the inclusion of Russia in the European-like system of transport corridors. Of the nine (corridors), three pass across Russian territory. Furthermore, this is the second time that the government has raised the subject of the preparations for winter. According to Mikhail Kasyanov, the situation has not improved since the first time the matter was brought up.²¹

The description of the corridors is enlightening for it shows how, after several years of cooperation, the exact locus of the pan-European corridors remains unclear.²² The claim that the development of the transport corridors is, in essence, a means of integrating Russia into the 'European-like system of transport corridors' seems to be a slip of the tongue rather than a serious statement. This is because it contradicts what was implicitly hinted at, although not explicitly uttered earlier in the news report. The first premise of the argument for the development of transport corridors in Russia was expressed at the beginning where the correspondent referred to the "advantageous geographical position" of Russia. The missing premise in the notion of the "advantageous geographical position" is the acknowledgement that Russia is located between "two dynamic

²¹ Telekanal ORT Novosti 7.9.2000 12:00 MSK.

²² From the very outset, the Russian discussion on the corridors was inconsistent and different terms were used to denote the same routes.

centres of the world economy: Europe and Asia”.²³ Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov is quoted as saying that:

Many countries receive a great deal of money from transit, and our country could receive more than the minimal amount she is currently receiving, due to the opportunities afforded by her geography. In addition, this (the development of the corridors) will bring investments and economic development to those regions where the transport corridors are located. Our international partners have shown interest in such projects. Concrete plans exist and we are examining them.²⁴

Kasyanov rounded off the argument by giving reasons why Russia’s geographical position is “advantageous”. First, the state would benefit from the expected increase in transit volumes through Russia, either by way of increased transit fees or, indirectly, due to an increase in the investments in the transport infrastructure development. The contradiction between the conclusion, presented by the correspondent, and the premises of the argument raise the question of the way in which the ‘semantic currency’ of transport corridors is used in the context of Russian politics. What form does the notion of a new European order inscribed into the development of ‘pan-European transport corridors’ take in the Russian context? Is the development of Russian international transport corridors about the creation of a competing set of transit routes through Russian territory where the ‘pan-European’ component is just one part of a larger game?

The subsequent chapters in this section constitute the first step towards answering these questions. I will start by elaborating on the concept of the ‘pan-European transport corridor’ and its emergence as a policy space at the all-European level. My analysis focuses on the ‘pan-European transport corridor IX’ concept and I will trace its usage to the emerging Finnish-Russian cooperation in the sphere of transport. In other words, I will reconstruct the process that led to the definition of ‘Corridor IX’. After this preliminary stage of analysis, I will focus on the way in which ‘Corridor IX’ was addressed in the Russian agentive context. What were the lines of reasoning provided by Russian authorities on cooperating in the framework of ‘Corridor IX’? This will allow me to preliminarily indicate how the semantic spaces converge. At the end of the chapter, I will return to the policy documents introduced briefly above and trace the points of convergence (and non-convergence) between the criteria defined for the development of

²³ Government of the RF 2000a.

²⁴ Telekanal ORT Novosti 7.9.2000 12:00 MSK.

Russian international transport corridors and those explicated in the framework of the policy on ‘Corridor IX’.

11 Identification of the links between the EU and its neighbours

11.1 The pan-European transport policy

The declaration approved by the second pan-European transport conference held in Crete on March 12–13, 1994 was an important milestone in the process of creating the new ‘pan-European transport corridor’ status, and with this status a new way of speaking about transport infrastructure development in Europe. The then forthcoming EU eastern enlargement required formative actions including a definition of the connections between the EU and the third countries. Both types of connections were identified in the form of ‘nine priority corridors’ that were seen as a part of the general initiative to collaborate on “developing and implementing *trans-European transport networks*, with due consideration being given to their interconnection and interoperability, with economically weaker regions being supported when necessary”.²⁵ The *connectivity* of the corridors to the TEN network and with the networks of neighbouring countries was identified on the basis of the priorities of the *pan-European transport policy*. The priorities were designed as a scheme consisting of three layers largely corresponding with the spheres of the three main agencies involved in the process of defining the corridors.²⁶

The first layer was based on the long-term perspective of European-wide infrastructure development and it was prepared under the auspices of the United Nations Economic Council of Europe (UN/ECE) together with the ECMT and ECAC (the European Civil Aviation Conference). The international agreements on the European Agreement on Main International Road Lines (AGN 1991) and

²⁵ Declaration 1994, paragraph 4.

²⁶ The priorities, or “set of indicative guidelines” as they were referred to in the declaration, were drafted in a document titled *Towards Indicative Guidelines for the further Development of Pan-European Transport Infrastructure*. The report was prepared by the Director General for Transport, Mr Coleman. See Reynaud 2003.

the European Agreement on Main International Railway Lines (AGC 1989) were formal expressions of the wish to design an “all-European transport policy” beyond the EU agency.²⁷ The two other layers outline the spatial and administrative contours of the corridors in the EU context. Accordingly, the definition of the second layer is based upon existing TEM²⁸ and TER²⁹ networks and the following criteria:

Every participating country in Central and Eastern Europe should be touched by at least one corridor;

Corridors should only be included if they are economically viable and if there is a realistic perspective of financing for their development to an appropriate level by the year 2010;

The corridors chosen should be consistent with a network concept thus reinforcing their individual viability.³⁰

Specific infrastructure projects that are eligible for financing “should contribute to implementation of the pan-European transport corridors and areas”³¹ and cover:

The necessary and economically viable physical infrastructure of corridors and areas according to their action plans; the necessary infrastructure for the intelligent use of transport systems; fostering new or appropriate technologies including rolling stock where it helps to promote the Common transport policy; improved rolling stock, when it helps to prevent expensive

²⁷ The agreements identify rail and road lines of international importance for Europe and define a set of technical and other parameters to which these routes should conform. For example, in the case of the AGTC agreement the parameters include the number of tracks required, the nominal minimum speed of trains, and the average length of a stop at the border. The inventory of existing AGTC standards and parameters from the year 2000 showed that many lines included in the network fail to meet the criteria established in the agreements. The lack of significant progress (since the first inventory in 1992) is noted to be evident in operating conditions at the borders, ferry links and terminals. According to the report, this “seriously erodes the competitiveness of freight transport by rail in general and particularly of combined transport.” TRANS/WP.24/2000/5, 8; AGCT Agreement.

²⁸ On July 1996 the European Parliament and Council adopted decision N1692/96/EC on Community guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network (TEN-T). The legal basis for the TEN-T is provided in the Treaty on the European Union. Under the terms of Chapter XV of the Treaty (Articles 154, 155 and 156), the European Union must aim to promote the development of trans-European networks as a key element for the creation of the Internal Market and the reinforcement of Economic and Social Cohesion. This development includes the interconnection and interoperability of national networks as well as access to such networks. European Parliament 1996b.

²⁹ The Trans-European Railway Network. See previous note.

³⁰ European Union 1997, Annex, 2.

³¹ European Union 1997, Annex, 2.

infrastructure investments; required services on the corridors or in the areas for international transport services, in particular at border crossings.³²

In the intra-EU context, the following statement recognizes ‘corridors’ as having been authorized in the process of choosing between specific investment projects:

The projects must be located on corridors as defined under layer 2 or be identified in the Community guidelines as projects of common interest. For Central and Eastern Europe, on the basis of a list of specific projects presented, these priorities should be determined through the application of agreed operational criteria for the selection of priorities. European Union priorities are set out in the Community guidelines; additional priorities are to be determined in accordance with its internal procedures.³³

The later reports note that the implementation of these criteria into practice has been inadequate and incoherent. In fact, the rules of existing investment programmes – the Interreg and TEN budget lines for the Union’s territory, PHARE for Central and South Eastern Europe, and Tacis for the NIS – have not been streamlined to allow the allocation of infrastructure investment along the length of the corridors in a coherent way.³⁴ Similarly, the standardization of the technical parameters of the TEN-T network (and subsequently the pan-European corridors) lacks homogeneity and consistency.³⁵ Despite the problems encountered in streamlining the intra-EU instruments for financing the development of the corridors, the same report concludes that:

The criteria are now more or less accepted for important infrastructure projects in Central and Eastern Europe. This results from the practice of the last two years in the G24 working groups (UN/ECE) and in the Community for dealing with the TEN, and gives a firm basis for future investments. The Commission will promote these criteria for the selection of all projects where the Community is participating.³⁶

The criteria served as a starting point for selecting projects outside the Union. The long-term objective, as expressed in the Christophersen Group’s report, was that the selected projects (and thus the corridors) should promote “wider economically

³² European Union 1997, Annex, 2.

³³ European Union 1997, Annex, 2; cf. European Communities 1993; European Union 1994.

³⁴ European Union 1997, 7.

³⁵ European Union 1998, 29.

³⁶ European Union 1997.

integrated space in a geographically balanced manner”.³⁷ While the first part of the formula is consistent with the aim of improving the competitiveness of the regions in question in accordance with the principles of a market economy, the second part leans in the direction of regional policy, where the transport infrastructure planning is seen as one of the means of diminishing disparity between peripheries and centres.

In the Tacis regulation covering the years 1996–1999, priority was given to the development of transport infrastructure and telecommunications. In particular, special reference was made to assistance measures in the Finnish-Russian border region. Transport and telecommunications also figured in the Russian Indicative Programme as a priority sector. In the TACIS framework, the notion of ‘pan-European transport corridor’ was used as a reference point in the TACIS budget funding for the western NIS. Funding was available for countries “involved in the trans-European network corridors II and IX and the Black Sea pan-European Transport Area (PETra)” to participate in TENs structures, in particular in the work of the Transport Network Needs Assessment (TINA) secretariat.³⁸

After the third Pan-European transport conference in 1997, the TINA Vienna Transport Strategies organization was assigned to report on and monitor the work of different working groups and steering committees. The first report was published in October 1999 and it was followed by similar reports published in 2002 and 2006 respectively. TINA is the acronym for the Transport Infrastructure Needs Assessment within which was identified a backbone network for the extension of the European TEN network into the new member states (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Romania, Bulgaria and Cyprus). The TINA process was the mechanism that changed the abstract notion of the ‘corridor’ into the administrative practices of *assessing* and *reporting* and the subsequent *forecasting* of expected benefits from, and obstacles to, the further development of the corridors. Within this framework, *recommendations* for priority investment projects were also made. The corridors located on Russian territory were beyond the TINA assessment process, but

³⁷ Trans-European Networks 1994, 41.

³⁸ For the accession countries, EU co-financing was available from the ISPA and PHARE budgets up to a maximum of 75 per cent for projects, and 100 per cent for technical assistance (PHARE). Until 2001, four projects along Corridor IX had acquired ISPA funding amounting to 60 million euros. The ISPA budget for environment and infrastructure projects between 2000–2006 was 1040 million euros per year in 1999 prices. BEATA Action Programme 1998; European Union 2000, 51; Weichbrodt 2001.

were subject to general monitoring under the title of “developments along the corridors”.³⁹

11.2 The (Turku)–Helsinki–St. Petersburg–Moscow corridor

Finland’s forthcoming membership of the European Union (January 1, 1995) was the situational context against which the meeting of the *Working Group on the Development of Transport Infrastructure of Finland and North-Western Russia* took place on June 10, 1994 in Helsinki.⁴⁰ The Russian newspaper *Izvestiya* reported on the meeting saying that: “Finnish business and political circles are discussing the plan to transform the south of the country into a major transport corridor between Western Europe and Russia”.

The sense of such a path, as explained here, is to offer to Western European companies reliable, cheap and convenient (transport) connections to the huge markets of Russia through the safe regions.⁴¹

The phrase “as explained here” refers to that unidentified group of ‘Finnish business and political circles’ who are of the opinion that Finland should become a major transit route to Russia. This route is described as follows:

The route should begin in Germany or adjacent EU member countries from where the cargo will be transported by sea to the ports of Turku or Hanko. Then it will be carried forward to Russia by trailers or trains. This route (*marshrut*) will also be quicker since the goods will need to cross only the Finnish-Russian border.⁴²

A representative of the Ministry of Transport and Communications of Finland, Juhani Tervala, was quoted as saying that the main task at that moment was to ensure that the route through Finland to Russia would be included on the “transport map of the European Union”.

If this is done, as the Finns hope, they would be able to acquire financing from the European Union and the World Bank in connection with this project. In this instance, the aim is to turn the existing route between

³⁹ TINA Vienna Transport Strategies; Pan-European Transport Corridors and Areas Status Report 2006; Ojala et al. 2004, 60.

⁴⁰ Mintec 1994b.

⁴¹ *Izvestiya* 8.7.1994.

⁴² *Izvestiya* 8.7.1994.

Turku and the border with Russia into a wide highway. And the railway will be modernized in a way that will allow the operation of high-speed cargo trains...⁴³

The discussion in Finland was guided by the assumption that the opening up of Russia and the economic development of the regions in the northwest of the country would open up new markets for Finnish transport and logistical services. The portrayal of Finland as a *Gateway to Russia* was also used in the domestic discussion to promote the building of new motorways in an east-west direction, although not without criticism.⁴⁴

Tervala's argument was in line with the EU Commission's argumentation. The Commission considered the initiative to develop the "Turku-Helsinki-St. Petersburg-Moscow" corridor as strategically important because it would provide:

Access to the Russian market via Finnish ports, both in terms of imports and exports. With Finland joining the Community in 1995, the Community interest in this project is increased.⁴⁵

A working group was promptly established to study the issue further. It included representatives from the Leningrad region administration, the Ministry of Transport and Communications of Finland and the European Commission.⁴⁶ The wording used in characterizing the *Turku-Helsinki-St. Petersburg-Moscow corridor* linked this regional initiative with the larger context of restructuring the European transport and infrastructure network.

⁴³ Izvestiya 8.7.1994. Tervala used the same argumentation when referring to the inclusion of the so-called 'Archangelsk corridor' among the European priority corridors. Kaleva 8.2.1995.

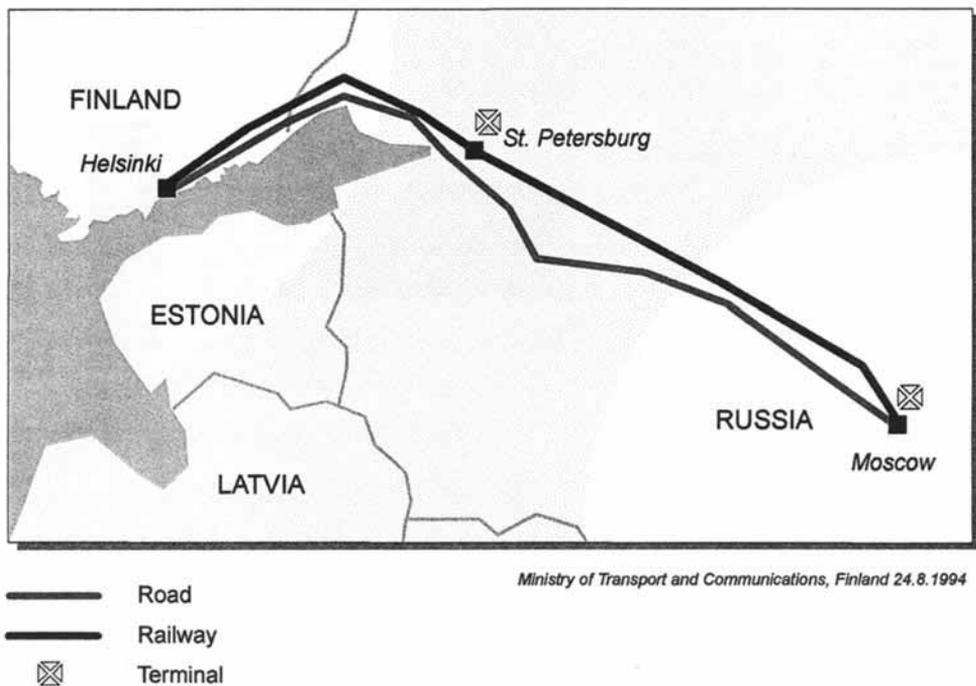
⁴⁴ Currently one quarter of Russia's total imports and approximately four per cent of exports use the Finnish route. The total annual volume of railway freight transportation in Finland is 43 million tons, of which the share of western-bound Russian trans-shipments is 40 per cent, i.e. 17 million tons. Gudok 10.3.2005; Ollus and Simola 2006, 60-69; see also Lautso et al. 2005. On the argumentation for Finland as a Gateway to Russia see e.g. the Finnish National Road Association 1992; Mintec 1993; Helsingin Sanomat 27.4.1994; Helsingin Sanomat 5.4.1995; Viatek 1996.

⁴⁵ Trans-European networks 1994, 42.

⁴⁶ The group included several representatives from the government of the Leningrad region, the deputy director of the October Railways and several officials from the Ministry of Transport of Finland. In the subsequent meeting of the group that was held in Helsinki on 10.6.1994 representatives from the EBRD and from the Federal Highway Department of the RF also participated. Mintec 1994a; Mintec 1994b.

The most important transportation corridor from Central Europe goes through Helsinki to St. Petersburg and Moscow. The corridor consists of both ground and sea transport links. The most important part of the sea transport corridor is the Baltic Sea. The position of the Gulf of Finland has been emphasized; several port capacity increase projects have been planned. The most essential part of the ground transport corridor is the Turku–Helsinki–St. Petersburg–Moscow connection. Additionally, the corridor is an extension to the Scandinavian corridor.⁴⁷

HELSINKI - ST. PETERSBURG - MOSCOW CORRIDOR



Map 3. Helsinki–St. Petersburg–Moscow Corridor.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ The ‘Scandinavian corridor’ to which the text refers is a draft title for a project that was later known as ‘the Nordic Triangle’. It was a joint initiative of Finland, Norway and Sweden prepared in the framework of the so-called Christophersen group. The *Group of Personal Representatives of Heads of State of Government* was chaired by Vice-President Christophersen (hence the name “The Christophersen Group”). Its main task was to identify priority projects within the TEN network and accelerate their implementation. The work of the group took place between January and November 1994. The main conclusions were presented to the Essen European Council on 28.11.1994 and published in the report titled *Trans-European Networks 1994*, 11–12, 41, 131; Mintec 1994b; Mintec 1994b.

⁴⁸ Mintec 1994c. Reproduced with the permission of Ministry of Transport and Communications Finland.

The corridor is characterized as an *interface* between the EU and Russia:

The Helsinki–St. Petersburg–Moscow corridor is the main entry to Russia, and also for Russian enterprises the main access point to the world markets. This is the only point where shipments between the EU and Russia need not cross any non-EU territory. A direct *interface* between the two large economic blocks is created. In addition, the corridor in its entire length becomes the backbone and the main transportation artery in the heartland of Russia.⁴⁹

The reasoning combines the understanding of the corridor as a temporal and institutional, as well as territorial entity. In the first case, seeing the corridor as a temporal and institutional arrangement, the focus is on the mechanisms of regulation and coordination.⁵⁰ The specific tasks envisioned include, for example, *reduction of travel time, improvement of reliability and security of transport, increased safety of transportation, and reduction of waiting time at the borders*. In other words, those aspects of international freight and passenger transportation that involve, and in fact, require the *coordinated interaction* of the different agencies involved (e.g. customs, border-guards, private and state-owned transport operators) as well as potential changes to the current transport and border-crossing practices (e.g. adoption of new information technology solutions).

The same statement implies a complementary understanding whereby ‘corridor’ does not realize a pre-given set of interconnections but, on the contrary, the process of defining the ‘corridor’ *results* in a re-arrangement of spatial distances. It is important to note that the reference to the ‘corridor in its entire length’ reveals aspects of the official EU discourse on the corridors. The “entire length of the corridor” in the EU documentation consisted of transport linkages from the forthcoming EU–Russia border (Finland) as far as Moscow (and later as far as Jekaterinburg and Nizhny Novgorod), whereas in Russia connections east of Moscow as far as the Russian Far East were also included. In the early stages of the negotiations between Finnish, Russian and Commission representatives, one of the development projects aimed to “increase the capacity of the railroad between the (Finnish–Russian) border–St. Petersburg–Moscow (Far East)”. This definition embraced the Russian interpretation of the location and geographical dimension of the proposed corridor. But as the official map of Corridor IX (Map

⁴⁹ Mintec 1994c. Emphasis added.

⁵⁰ A similar division between the ‘territorial’ focus of the corridor policy and the ‘administrative-institutional’ focus is found in the interpretation of the concept of ‘integrated European transport’ first introduced in the Prague Declaration. See ECMT 1995, 200.

2) shows, reasoning in favour of the extended interpretation remained marginal. Later it was even suggested that only transport connections as far as St. Petersburg would be included in the Crete corridor framework.⁵¹

11.3 The pan-European transport corridor IX

The institutional mechanism for the development of pan-European transport corridors in Russia was negotiated during the spring of 1995. Negotiations on the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the Development of Crete Corridor IX were concluded in Moscow in March 1995 and the eight countries⁵² involved signed the document in Vilnius in April 1995.⁵³ As defined in the MoU, Corridor IX extended the geographical scope of the “Turku–Helsinki–St. Petersburg–Moscow” corridor southwards to Ukraine:

Corridor IX is the longest of the ten pan-European multi-modal Transport Corridors. The Corridor starts in Helsinki (Finland), runs to St. Petersburg (Russia), where it splits into two branches, one running to Moscow (Russia), the second to Pskov (Russia). Both branches come together again in Kiev (Ukraine). In Ljubashevka/Rozdilna (Ukraine) the Corridor splits again. One branch runs down to Chisinau (Moldova), further to Bucharest (Romania), Dimitrovgrad (Bulgaria) and ends at the Aegean Sea in the Greek port of Alexandroupolis.⁵⁴

⁵¹ France was particularly opposed to putting too much emphasis on the connections to the third countries that did not have an existing European agreement. Ulkoasiainministeriö 1994.

⁵² The signatories included: Finland, Moldova, Belarus, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Romania, Russia, and the European Union. The Hellenic Republic joined the agreement in October 1995. Addendum 1995.

⁵³ The ministries of Transport of Russia, Poland, Belarus, and Germany had signed a similar document on the development of Corridor II as early as January 1995. In 2005 the volume of freight traffic in the Russian part of the corridor was 7.9 million tons. Although the volume is still slow, in 2005 transit traffic along the corridor increased by 55.8 per cent. Rossiiskie Vesti 24.1.1995, 13; Kommersant 5.4.1995; Pietarin liikenneviesti 2005, 8.

⁵⁴ SPECTA 2002, 91.



Map 4. Pan-European Corridor IX. Source: SPECTA 2002.⁵⁵

The declaration of the new status ‘Corridor IX’ and its continued use in the EU documents and as a part of public discussion created, and confirmed, a new form of interconnectedness – that of belonging to ‘Corridor IX’. According to the official definition the corridor consists of:

Road, rail and combined transport infrastructures, including ancillary installations such as access roads, border crossing stations, service stations, freight and passenger terminals, warehouses and the installations necessary

⁵⁵ Reproduced with the kind permission of TINA secretariat.

for traffic management, on the route defined above, and their interactions with infrastructures and transport in all modes on the same or reasonably related routes.⁵⁶

The development of the corridor consists of the “maintenance, upgrading and new construction of main and ancillary infrastructures as well as their operation and use, and co-ordinated activities in carrying out the studies (on corridors)”.⁵⁷ The agreement does not specify a timeline for the completion of the “maintenance, upgrading and new construction”. Rather, it defines how to conduct studies undertaken in this framework (Article 3), the procedures of the exchange of information (Article 4), the common set of technical norms necessary to secure the optimal interoperability of all sections of the corridor (Article 5), and actions envisioned to “stimulate and promote” border-crossing and customs co-operation (Article 6). The idea was that the private sector and the international financial institutions would take part in the “development, operation and use of the corridor” including, particularly, the financing of the studies and infrastructure projects within the area of the corridor (Article 7).⁵⁸

The primary function of the corridor, as it appears in the MoU agreement and previous discussion, was to *encode and organize information and investments* in a way that would contribute to the *coordinated development of the corridor*. The agreement highlighted the need to conduct joint studies on the state of the infrastructure needs assessment and the overall concept for the coordinated development of the corridor. Previously, most of the transport statistics and studies had been conducted within the limits of a particular country, but now it became necessary to produce information on transport flows and infrastructure along the whole length of the corridor. An implicit reason was even simpler. Studies were needed because they had not been conducted *before* the corridors were actually defined.

The problem was that the formal powers of the new cooperation mechanism were limited. The agreement did not single out an enforcement mechanism should the parties not conform to what was agreed. The practical cooperation work was carried out in the steering committee of each corridor. The steering committee of ‘Corridor IX’ was divided into four sub-committees where the northernmost part of the corridor (IXA) was the responsibility of the Finnish and Russian

⁵⁶ Memorandum 1995, Article 2.

⁵⁷ Memorandum 1995, Article 1.

⁵⁸ Memorandum 1995, Article 7.

transport authorities. The members of this sub-committee included the Finnish Ministry of Transport, the Ministry of Transport of the Russian Federation, the Ministry of Railways of the Russian Federation and the European Commission Directorate for Energy and Transport. It met annually until 2001, after which time the *Barents-Euro-Arctic Pan-European Transport Area* (BEATA) became the primary cooperation framework between the EU countries, other Barents Euro-Arctic Region countries and Russia.⁵⁹

12 Tracing a rift in the Russian position

12.1 'Corridor IX' as a site for 'rerouting' Russia's foreign trade

The reconstruction of the border-crossing points at the Russian–Finnish border was one of the key components in the development of 'Corridor IX'. The same railway gauge and lower operational costs at the Finnish ports were factors that spoke in favour of the Finnish route. The customs delays that hampered traffic, particularly in the port of St. Petersburg, could also be avoided by using the Finnish route.⁶⁰ After the August 1998 economic crisis in Russia had passed and economic growth had started, roughly from 2000 onwards, the queues of trucks waiting to cross the border from Finland to Russia have become a permanent feature of the border landscape. Consequently, the issue is firmly established as a subject for high-level negotiations between Russia and Finland.⁶¹ But such a scenario was not yet envisioned in the mid-1990s when the idea of Finland *as a gateway to Russia* emerged in the public discussion in Finland.

⁵⁹ Memorandum 1995, Article 4; Progress report 2000.

⁶⁰ In late 2001, the transport unions of North-West Russia wrote a letter to President Putin asking him to personally restore "normal order at the Russian borders". According to the signatories, queues on the Russian side of the border were "enormous", and at the St. Petersburg seaport, for example, cargo flows were severely hampered because customs formalities would take over two weeks. The problems at the Russian seaports were also reported in several studies conducted in the framework of the TACIS North-West Russia transport development study. Rosbalt 20.11.2001; Finansovye Izvestiya 3.8.1995; Tacis 1998, 227; Tacis 2000, 14.

⁶¹ In the mid-1990s the queues at the border were a couple of kilometers long. In late 2006 a queue that was normally from 10 to 15 km long reached all the way to Hamina, located 40 km from the border. Helsingin Sanomat 7.9.2006; Helsingin Sanomat 26.6.1997; Finansovye Izvestiya 10.7.1997.

In the Russian press, the “Russian-Finnish transport corridor” was seen as an important pathway for Russia’s foreign trade shipments to the Scandinavian countries and beyond. The momentum of the ‘corridor’, as it was explained, emerges “completely (*vpolne*) naturally”. The “naturalness” is a feature of the loss of the Baltic ports, on account of which Russia’s foreign trade flows were diverted to the St. Petersburg–Helsinki route. “With the increase in the volume of transportation it became evident that the existing scope of the transport routes is not sufficient”.

Attempts to compensate for the loss of the Baltic ports by building new ports on the Gulf of Finland turned out to be extraordinarily expensive and therefore speak in favour of the modernization of the transport corridor.⁶²

It was generally acknowledged that relying solely on state funding for the infrastructure development was “absurd”. Instead, ministries eyed both foreign and domestic private investments for the infrastructure modernization.⁶³ Co-financing of the projects identified in the framework of ‘pan-European transport corridor IX’ was regarded as a realistic option. The list of prioritized projects in the Russian part of the corridor included: rehabilitation and maintenance of the road between the border with Finland, Vyborg, St. Petersburg and Moscow; bypasses for the city of Vyborg and the city of St. Petersburg; a capacity increase at the railway border, St. Petersburg, and Moscow (Far East); the expansion of the Buslovskaya railway yard at the Finnish border; freight terminals for rail and road transport in the city of St. Petersburg and the city of Moscow; the implementation of new telecommunication connections between transportation companies and border and customs officials.⁶⁴

By 2001, a total of 36 projects in ‘Corridor IX’ had acquired TACIS funding including 17 road projects, 17 rail projects and 2 multi-modal projects. The “development of infrastructure networks” in Russia acquired a total of 55 million euros between 1997 and 1999. For the Russian part, the corridor IX road projects were largely funded by the World Bank road loan and a separate bridging loan

⁶² Kommersant 28.9.1994.

⁶³ Rossiiskaya Gazeta 11.2.1998; Oktyabr’skaya Magistral’ 21.6.1997; Delovoi Mir 1.8.1997; Finansovye Izvestiya 4.11.1997.

⁶⁴ On the Finnish side, nine projects were listed including, for example, the upgrading of the E-18 road from Turku to the border, the improvement of the existing railway between Lahti and the border, the planning of the new high-speed railway Kerava-Lahti, and the development of Helsinki-Vantaa Airport. The list of Finnish projects included a rough estimation of the costs, whereas the costs of the projects on the Russian side were not available. Mintec 1994b.

granted to Russia in 1996. In all, 360 km of the road from the Finnish border to St. Petersburg and Moscow was upgraded between 1997 and 2000. The St. Petersburg–Vyborg section was upgraded to the level of an “international high-speed road”.⁶⁵

The extensive upgrading of the Moscow-St. Petersburg railway was carried out and completed in 2000, thus allowing passenger train speeds of 200km/h. Between St. Petersburg and the Finnish border the travelling time has been shortened by 30 minutes due to track upgrading. Further work between Helsinki and St. Petersburg has commenced under the name of “the high-speed train project between St. Petersburg and Helsinki”. Several projects aimed at upgrading railway communications, tracking and tracing and customs cooperation were ongoing in 2006 within this framework. The project has been prioritized in the Modernization Programme, as well as on the Finnish-Russian bilateral cooperation agenda.⁶⁶

The planned improvement in the quality of transport services has yielded mixed results. The valuable cargo transported by truck to Moscow was until the end of the 1990s prone to hijacking, robbery or theft. On a more positive note, the TACIS-funded North-West Regional Transport Development study⁶⁷ concluded in 1998 that “there is competition between container transport by road and rail in Corridor IX”. The competition brought down the tariffs and the use of express container trains significantly reduced transportation time (by up to 3 or 4 times that of ordinary general cargo trains).⁶⁸

The basic assumption in the above-mentioned TACIS study was that demand, for example for port capacity, is “ruled by market-oriented forces guiding the

⁶⁵ Weichbrodt 2001.

⁶⁶ Mintrans 2001b, 33; Memorandum 2001; TINA 2002, 95; SPECTA 2006, 135–137; SPECTA 2002, 93; the Ministry of Transport and Communications of Finland 2001; Weichbrodt 2001. On November 23, 2006 in the framework of the EU-Russia Summit in Helsinki, the Finnish Railways and OAO Russian Railways announced that the companies would establish a joint company Oy Karelian Trains Ltd that would start operation of the high-speed trains between Helsinki and St. Petersburg. Helsingin Sanomat 24.11.2006.

⁶⁷ The Tacis-funded study was compatible with the TINA project. The studies conducted in this framework produced data on existing and forecasted transport flows within the region and between North-West Russia and the adjacent regions (particularly the Baltic states and Finland). It also gave policy recommendations on investments in the transport and infrastructure system in North-West Russia. The studies included: a transport demand study, a transport development strategy, a master plan for road maintenance, a master plan for ports and several other sub-projects, including, for example, a study on the Belkomur Railway and the Northern Sea Route. Tacis 1998, 16. Later studies focused on modelling freight transport in the Northwest Region or specifically in ‘Corridor IX’. See e.g. Research and Design Institute of Regional Development and Transportation 2003.

⁶⁸ Tacis 1998, 172–173. On transport-related crime see e.g. Larjavaara 1999, 68–71.

transport flows to the ports offering the best services and prices”.⁶⁹ Thus, the reasoning went that increased competition for transport flows between different trade routes, and especially between ports, would facilitate the implementation of reforms in the main problem areas. The general conclusion was that the “inadequate infrastructure in Russia was not the main issue” but the quality of service was. The main problems were customs delays, the lack of well-equipped warehouses and other logistical infrastructure, plus the inadequacy of safety procedures and available information technologies. Due to these and other reasons, the existing ports in the Finnish Gulf actually had considerable spare capacity in 1999, and the forecasted growth of transport flows could be managed by improving the organizational and administrative structure of the ports.⁷⁰

It was generally acknowledged in Russian discussions that until the country’s ports functioned properly, there was no sense in lowering tariffs in order to reorient traffic from foreign ports to national port complexes.⁷¹ The Railway Tariff Policy reform implemented in early 2004 helped to do just the opposite. The reasoning for a change in the policy was expressed in the Transport Strategy as follows:

Tariff regulation of natural monopolies at sea ports shall be linked to tariff regulation in the railway segment with a view to improving the competitiveness of domestic products, consolidating Russia’s economic space, and enhancing the attractiveness of Russian ports and carriers.⁷²

In this way, favourable conditions for trans-shipments of Russian exports through Russian ports were created. The cost of transport via land borders (e.g. to ports in the Baltic states and Finland) became 2 to 4 times higher compared with transport via Russian ports.⁷³ From the beginning of 2006, the tariff policy was changed

⁶⁹ Tacis 2000, 12.

⁷⁰ Tacis 1998, 174, 234–235.

⁷¹ Westwood 2002, 183–184. However, lower tariff regimes for transit traffic known as ‘through traffic’ (*skvoznyh*) were negotiated between the Ministry of Railways and the Ministry of Transport. Rossiiskaya Gazeta 5.2.1997; Frank 1999.

⁷² Mintrans 2004c, 18.

⁷³ For example, the total annual volume of railway freight transportation in Finland is 43 million tons and the share of western-bound Russian trans-shipments is 40 per cent, 17 million tons. According to the head of October Railways, Viktor Stepov, during the first eight months of 2004 the volume of railway freight traffic via the Buslovskaya–Vainikkala border-crossing point was 27.1 per cent less than in the same period one year earlier. On the whole, it was expected that the freight volume in 2004 would be 8 per cent less than in the previous year. Transit freight shipments through the border-crossing point at Vartius were halted completely in 2004 and shipments through Svetogorsk decreased by 13 per cent. Oktyabr’skaya Magistral 23.9.2004; Luhtanen 2004; Ojala et al. 2004, 152; Ollus and Simola 2006.

again and favourable railway tariff rates for Russian ports were dropped.⁷⁴ But I would now like to return to the early stages of development, to the period when the reasoning for a policy on the ‘corridors’ was emerging.

12.2 The South-Centre-North corridor

The rebuilding of the Buslovskaya railway station at the border was among the projects prioritized at the second meeting of the Finnish-Russian corridor working group in September 1994.⁷⁵ The construction of the Buslovskaya railway station began in September 1995 with a special ceremony. Participating in the ceremony, the Russian Minister of Railways, Gennadi Fadeev, stated that the reconstruction of the station and the railway line between Buslovskaya, St. Petersburg and Moscow went in this direction:

A vigorous transport corridor *North-Centre*, which was recognized as one of the priority corridors at the pan-European transport conference last year.⁷⁶

Fadeev’s statement was one of those rare occurrences when the two alternative, complementary, but definitely different vocabularies came together. Moreover, it hints at an alternative to the EU-context way of speaking about the corridors. Coincidentally, just one day before the ceremony, an article appeared in the Russian press that helped to put Fadeev’s words into an appropriate context.

The article reported on an initiative by the Ministry of Transport to organize combined transport along the “strategic direction ‘South-Centre-Baltic’” in order to “correct the negative economic situation” in the country. The formation of a “South-Centre-Baltic” corridor would be the “first step taken towards civilized markets of transport services in Russia”. In addition to the economic benefits deriving from the creation of “direct linkages between production cycle and transport process” the new transport route was expected to draw transit and

⁷⁴ Under the forthcoming WTO regulation, Russia is required to harmonize domestic and international freight tariffs until 2009. Pietarin liikenneviesti 2005, 8–9. On tariff policy after 2001, see e.g. Izvestiya 18.1.2001; Ekonomika i Zhizn 31.8.2003.

⁷⁵ Subsequently, the Russian Ministry of Transport announced that it would invest approximately 90 billion roubles in the reconstruction of four railway crossing-points at the Finnish–Russian border, including Buslovskaya. The Finnish Railways granted credit of 8 million euros for the project. Finansovye Izvestiya 3.8.1995; Haapala 1996; Mintec 1994c; Memorandum of the meeting 2001; SPECTA 2002, 95; Ukolov 2001.

⁷⁶ Finansovye Izvestiya 3.8.1995.

Russian foreign trade flows. That would, however, require “new forms of organization of commercial and operational activities”, namely the creation and development of freight forwarding services.⁷⁷

At the same time, another line of argumentation emerged. In the press, the Railways was widely criticized for continuing the Soviet-era practice which, according to critics, encouraged long and even “useless” journeys to the detriment of the state interest.⁷⁸ The “state interest” was, according to this line of reasoning, equated with the development of Russian ports and was portrayed as a matter of the “economic security” of Russia. Elaborating on what was understood by economic security in this context, L. Ezhkin, the head of the VNIIVS sector at the Ministry of Economy of the RF characterized the transport complex as the key element in Russia’s ‘foreign economic security’. The efficiency of international trans-shipments was one of the main parameters providing for the country’s foreign economic security. On these grounds, private and foreign investments in “objects of state importance” including, for example, the main railway network, the set of strategic roads, bridges and tunnels, border-crossing stations (railway and road), strategic ports and airports, and strategically important pipelines should be restricted. What was feared was that a ‘market mechanism’ would be used for the “monopolization of the interests of the private sector in the development and management of the port complexes”. The argument was targeted primarily against those private companies and interest groups involved in the development of port complexes in the Leningrad region in the early 1990s.⁷⁹

The assumption, although often unarticulated, is that the development of ‘pan-European transport corridor IX’ contributes to the facilitation of Russia’s foreign trade (excluding energy) between major Russian cities (St. Petersburg

⁷⁷ The envisioned tasks of the development of the corridor include development of freight forwarding services, the construction of four logistical centres at St. Petersburg, the Moscow region, Rostov-na-Donu and Novorossiisk, and the development of new administrative practices for handling the traffic flows. *Birzhevye Vedomosti* 2.8.1995. In late September, *Rossiiskaya Gazeta* published an almost identical article by the same author. Only the order of appearance of the arguments in the article was slightly changed. *Rossiiskaya Gazeta* 23.9.1995.

⁷⁸ The Ministry of Transport and Communications of Finland and the Ministry of Railways signed an agreement on the development of the transport corridor *Scandinavia–Europa* on October 1994. The parties agreed to facilitate measures aimed at reducing the travelling time between the two countries, and along the corridor ‘Berlin–Warsaw–Minsk–Moscow–St. Petersburg–Helsinki’. *Finansovye Izvestiya* 6.10.1994, 46; *Segodnya* 8.10.1994. *Segodnya* 15.2.1996; *Finansovye Izvestiya* 4.11.1997; *Oktyabr’skaya Magistral’* 26.6.1997; *Profil* 23.1.2006; *Izvestiya* 24.1.2006. For more on ton-kilometres and other indicators used by the Soviet planners, see Nove 1977.

⁷⁹ Ezhkin 1994; for later versions of the same argument, see e.g. PRAIM-TASS 28.1.1998; *Transport Rossii* 3.–9.5.1999; Yakunin 2002; Rukshi 2002; *Mintrans* 2004c.

and Moscow) and the EU member states. The line of argumentation pursuing economic security advocated redirecting the transport flows, especially crude oil and oil products, to the ports in the Russian part of the Gulf of Finland. Later, a new strand of reasoning evolved that explicated the development of transport corridors as a means of facilitating transit transport through the territory of Russia. In this way, the rather narrow scope of cooperation in the framework of 'pan-European transport corridor IX' was extended to spheres that were absent, or at least not formally articulated in that context.

13 The 'inevitable integration' of Russian and European transport systems

13.1 The convergence of vocabularies

Izvestiya reports on the project to create a transport corridor between the Baltic and the Black Sea. The transport corridor is a system of communications, interconnected motorways, railways, airports, seaports, warehouses...

Consequently the Russian corridor will become part of the transcontinental transport system that connects Northern and Western Europe with the countries of the Middle East, Turkey and Iran.⁸⁰

The above quotation illustrates the vocabulary with which the discussion on the Russian transport corridors evolved. Terminology would be a premature term at this stage, although the consolidation of the usage of the word 'corridor' may be traced back to the elaboration of the Russian position that took place before the Third Pan-European Transport Conference in Helsinki in June 1997.

In a statement given before the conference in Helsinki, the head of the Russian delegation, Minister of Transport Nikolai Tsakh⁸¹, emphasized that the integration of the Russian transport complex with the "transport system of the continent

⁸⁰ ITAR-TASS 22.3.1996.

⁸¹ Tsakh was appointed Minister of Transport in January 1996 and served until February 1998, when he was replaced by Sergei Frank. Frank served as Minister of Transport until early 2004. The former deputy head of the Severstal company, Igor Levitin, was appointed Minister of Transport in March 2004.

is inevitable” (*neizbezhna*).⁸² Russia should not seek to challenge the “Crete corridors” defined in the cooperation with the UN/ECE, EKTU and the European Commission. Rather, the proposal put forward by the Russian delegation was that the ‘pan-European corridors’ in the territory of Russia should be “extended” further to the east.⁸³

The view endorsed by Minister Tsah in his speech at the Conference was that the “cooperation should not stop at Europe’s frontiers but should also be extended to Asia”. The majority of the articles published at the time in the Russian press focused on just this issue: the (geographical) definition of the corridors proposed by Russia. The simplest argument for ‘extending’ the corridors was given by Minister Tsah who said that the proposal “to develop Europe–Asia transport connections is based on the geographical position of Russia”.⁸⁴ During the process of elaborating on Russia’s position on corridor development, this simple and indisputable insight proved to have lasting value.

On the eve of the conference, the Ministry of Transport prepared a proposal including the following five directions:

- Baltic (St. Petersburg) – Centre (Moscow) – Black Sea (Novorossiysk);
- Moscow – Astrakhan;
- West (Berlin – Warsaw – Minsk) – Centre (Moscow) – Nizhniy Novgorod – Ural;
- Northern Sea Route;
- Inland water routes from the Black Sea and the Azov sea regions via the Volga–Don canal to the Caspian Sea.⁸⁵

The ‘South–Centre–Baltic’ corridor reappeared in this context in the form of *Baltic–Centre–Black Sea*. It was characterized as an indissoluble continuation of the route that is already included in one of the ‘Crete corridors’ stretching from the

⁸² PRAIM-TASS 23.6.1997; Aгенstvo Natsional’naya Sluzhba Novostei 22.6.1997.

⁸³ Izvestiya 27.6.1997. The Minister of Railways Gennadi Fadeev’s statement where he characterized the ‘North–Centre’ corridor as one of the priority corridors defined at the pan-European level was an earlier version of the same argument. The statement was declarative in the sense that Fadeev, by using a notion familiar from previous Russian discourse, was arguing for the extension of the pan-European corridors beyond Moscow further to the south.

⁸⁴ Tsakh 1997; European Parliament 1997d.

⁸⁵ The Department of Coordination of the Transport System at the Ministry of Transport was the agency responsible for the proposal. Oktyabr’skaya Magistral’ 23.6.1997; Interfaks-Aif 23.6.1997.

Russian border with Finland via St. Petersburg to Moscow, and should therefore be included in the Crete 'Corridor IX' as "a unitary whole". The proposed corridor is over 2000 km long and it crosses the European part of Russia in a meridian direction. The fact that over 60 million people live in the areas adjacent to the 'corridor' and that the industry in the regions is well developed, are mentioned in the reasoning for the proposition. The second proposal for a corridor from Moscow to Astrakhan should be seen as "an independent branch line in a north-south direction from the above-mentioned *Baltic-Centre-Black Sea* corridor". This would help to ensure the continuation of the foreign trade links between the countries in the Baltic Sea region, Russia, the Central Asian countries and India.⁸⁶

The Russian authorities were not alone in their efforts to adjust the 'pan-European Transport Corridors'. In all, over 80 proposals for adjustments, realignments and extensions to the nine corridors were made before the conference. The report on the Adjustments to Crete Corridors prepared together with the CEMT, UN/ECE, and the European Commission secretariats analyzed the proposals and consequently concluded that the nine pan-European corridors and the guidelines for the TEN network development "constitute a valid basis for coherent infrastructure development at the pan-European level".⁸⁷ Additionally, the realignment of the corridors should be "based on the development of links between major activity centres". But since this approach did not adequately address the transport infrastructure needs of areas that are surrounded by or linked to the sea basin, the new concept of the Pan-European Transport Area was introduced. The Conference accepted a few changes to the Crete Corridors and established four new Transport Areas (the Barents Euro-Arctic Area (Beata), The Black Sea Basin Area, the Mediterranean Basin Area, and the Adriatic/Ionian Seas Area). Administratively and conceptually, the Transport Areas were comparable with the corridors.⁸⁸

The report also had a separate section titled Euro-Asian linkages. The linkages were characterized as an extension of "the AGR, AGC, AGTC and AGN networks to the trans-Caucasian and Central Asian members of the UN/ECE". The steering committees and working parties of the "relevant corridors and areas" were assigned the task of further examining links:

⁸⁶ Oktyabr'skaya Magistral' 23.6.1997; Interfaks-Aif 23.6.1997.

⁸⁷ European Parliament 1997a, 1-2.

⁸⁸ European Parliament 1997c, 8. The subsequent Russian discussion on 'corridors' very rarely acknowledges the concept of Transport Areas, even if at the regional level cooperation within the BEATA framework has been active. See the previous chapter.

- to the Northern Sea route
- to the trans-Siberian trunk line
- from Moscow to Novorossiysk and to Astrakhan
- to the TRACECA including the Volga-Don link and
- to the Black Sea shore connections to the Caucasus, the Near and Middle East, and Central Asia.⁸⁹

The new term 'Euro-Asian connections' was a *separate* but *parallel* term to that of the corridors and areas. It was not formally recognized in the conference declaration, which identified only the "updated Crete Corridors". 'Updating' here referred to the extension of pan-European Corridor II as far as Nizhniy Novgorod.⁹⁰ The results of the adjustments are presented in the following two maps. The first was commissioned by the UN/ECE and represents linkages between the corridors. The coloured lines emphasize the different statuses of the corridors. 'Pan-European corridor IX' is a thin black line whereas the 'international transport corridor "North-South"' is marked with a blue dotted line. However, the continuous line denotes the spatial compatibility of the two different types of corridors.

⁸⁹ European Parliament 1997a, 4; Interfaks-Aif 23.6.1997.

⁹⁰ European Parliament 1997c, section IV, paragraph 4.



Map 5. The Euro-Asian Land Transport Corridors. Source: UN/ECE.⁹¹

The official Russian interpretation was that the Conference had accepted “in principle our proposition to extend the existing ‘pan-European corridor IX’ as far as Novorossiisk and Astrahan, ‘corridor II’ as far as Nizhnii Novgorod, and also to utilize the Northern Sea Route and the Volgo–Don canal”.⁹² Later, Minister Tsah repeated his earlier statement by saying that “in particular, Russia will extend the Berlin–Warsaw–Moscow transport corridor to Nizhniy Novgorod and the Helsinki–Moscow–Rostov-na-Donu transport corridor to Volgograd, Astrahan, and further to Iran and Central Asia”. He also explained that “recognition of the perspective of the new corridors (proposed by Russia) will encourage major foreign investments (in their development)”. “It cannot be ruled out that the corridors may be utilized as transit routes connecting Europe with Asia”.⁹³

Both Russian experts and representatives of the European Commission agreed that the proposal to extend ‘Corridor II’ (Berlin–Warsaw–Minsk–Moscow)

⁹¹ Copyright@ United Nations 2005. Downloaded from <http://www.unece.org/trans/wp24/documents/press-releasekiev0409.pdf>. Reproduced with the kind permission of the secretariat of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

⁹² Izvestiya 27.6.1997.

⁹³ Praim-TASS 4.7.1997; Segodnya 5.7.1997.

beyond Moscow towards the Volga region should be commenced in phases. In the first phase, as was agreed before the conference, 'Corridor II' was extended from Moscow to Nizhniy Novgorod, thereby creating a link to the trans-Siberian route.⁹⁴



Map 6. Russian International Transport Corridors.⁹⁵

In the Russian context, the two types of corridors are interwoven, conveying the similarity rather than the difference between them. The visual representation of the corridors exemplifies the argument that it was a question of 'extending' the pan-European corridors to the East and the South. These arrangements were labelled 'Euro-Asian linkages' in the pan-European context, thus emphasizing that it was a question of as yet unspecified 'attachments' to the trans-European network.⁹⁶ In the Russian discussions, the same linkages bore in their name a

⁹⁴ In June 2001 'Corridor II' was extended to Yekaterinburg. Towards a pan-European transport network. European Parliament 1997a, 3; Interfaks-Aif 23.6.1997; Rosbalt 22.6.2001.

⁹⁵ I acquired the map from the representative of the Northwestern Russia regional association in St. Petersburg in 2001. A similar map with some modifications is published in Euro-Asian Transport Links. Past. Present. Future. 2003.

⁹⁶ The notion "Euro-Asian linkages" was later institutionalised in the framework of the UNECE-UNESCAP cooperation. UNECE-UNESCAP 2004.

trace of the Soviet past in being dubbed the ‘South–Centre–Baltic’ or the ‘North–South’ corridors.

The above discussion points towards a dual perception of the ‘transport corridors’. Whereas a Russian official looking at the corridor map mainly saw the western-bound transit traffic (from Asia to Europe), a bureaucrat or businessperson looking at the same map from the perspective of one of the EU member states saw only the eastern-bound cargo traffic (transported from Asia by the sea route via European logistical centres to Russia). In the Russian context, these two alternative ways of perceiving the corridors formed the basis for the elaboration of the concept of the international Euro-Asian transport corridor. As the above discussion suggests, similar words (vocabulary) were used in Russia and in the pan-European context. In the section titled ‘The Nesting’ I will elaborate on whether the policies embedded in the terms which were used also converged. Before that I will try to assess the non-explicit assumptions in the formulation of the policy on ‘international transport corridors’ in Russia.

13.2 A roof for the new policy

The third Pan-European Transport Conference in Helsinki in June 1997 was generally regarded as a great success. But the institutional arrangement known as the ‘pan-European transport conference’ had come to an end. The European Commission’s position was that future work, such as monitoring the implementation of a set of common principles on the trans-European transport policy, should be commenced within the established institutions (the EU, UN/ECE and the ECMT) and not by any extra-institutional arrangements. This effectively ended the mandate of the Steering Committee that had been responsible for organizing the conferences. On the same occasion, a decision was made not to organize pan-European conferences, at least in the foreseeable future.⁹⁷

This was the situational context in which the Russian Minister of Transport, Nikolai Tsakh, invited the European Parliament and the ECMT to take part in the

⁹⁷ Mietintö 17.2.1999; Mattsson 1997; European Parliament 1997d; Mayak 26.6.1997 21:00 MSK. The declaration accepted by the Helsinki conference did not assign an explicit agency to monitor further work. Instead it requested the EU, the ECMT, the UN/ECE and other relevant partners at the multilateral and regional level “to cooperate in the aggregation of relevant data, to review progress towards regional and sectoral goals, and to make proposals for more effective implementation on the basis of experience”. European Parliament 1997c, 9.

special conference organized in St. Petersburg in 1998.⁹⁸ Tsakh expressed a wish that the conference would draw international attention to the development of the main transport arteries between Europe and Asia, thereby helping to “eliminate asymmetry (*disbalanca*) between the accelerating tempo of the development of transport systems in the European Union member states and the development of transport systems in countries in the East”.⁹⁹ Even before the conference took place, Minister Tsakh characterized it as a “turning point” in international cooperation in the transport sphere. Organizing just such a conference would help to “consolidate the transport-political agreement reached earlier during the Helsinki conference concerning the alignment of the transport systems of the West and the East, and to harmonize the transport legislation”.¹⁰⁰

On the same occasion, Minister Tsakh voiced a need for a federal-level coordination of transport policy in Russia. Furthermore, the minister claimed that “a special body had been set up to coordinate transport policy through the year 2000 and beyond on the basis of a plan and measures which would guarantee the achievement of optimal results”.¹⁰¹ The statement was slightly premature as the “special body” had not yet been formally established. The point he was making was, however, declarative: the statement was clearly intended as a declaration of intent about what to do next.

A substantial part of the discussion in the Russian press after the transport conference in June 1997 focused on the following two objectives: the organization of the international Euro-Asian transport conference in St. Petersburg in spring 1998 and, related to it, the formulation of a federal policy on transport corridors. In fact, the task of organizing the conference became a formal ‘roof’ under which the Russian position on the transport corridors was formulated. The way in which these tasks were articulated and interlinked in the discussion is the key to understanding the convergence of the semantic spaces of the ‘pan-European transport corridor’ concept and the concept of the ‘international transport corridor’.

⁹⁸ Right after the third Pan-European Transport Conference held in Helsinki in June 1997, high-level officials from the EU, Finland and Russia participated in the conference titled “the development of transport systems of Russia and St. Petersburg in the context of all-European transport policy” at the hotel Astoria in St. Petersburg.

⁹⁹ Oktyabr’skaya Magistral’ 27.6.1997; Radio Mayak 26.6.1997 21:00 MSK; European Parliament 1997d.

¹⁰⁰ Transport Rossii 1998:2.

¹⁰¹ Oktyabr’skaya Magistral’ 23.6.1997; Radio Mayak 26.6.1997 21:00 MSK; European Parliament 1997d; European Parliament 1997c, 42.

Formally, the two propositions were brought together in the government directive dated November 22, 1997. With this directive, the Russian government accepted the proposition by the Transport Ministry and the Foreign Ministry to organize an international Euro-Asian transport conference on May 1998 in St. Petersburg. The organizing committee, resembling the steering committee of the pan-European transport conferences, was established and charged with the task of “coordinating the work of the federal agencies in organizing the conference”. The directive also created a formal framework in terms of which the Ministry of Transport and other relevant ministries and agencies were authorized to formulate a draft “directive for the delegation of the Russian Federation at the conference”. It was to “reflect on the Russian position” on the following issues: international transport politics, international cooperation in the transport sphere, as well as the competitiveness of Russian operators in transit transport through the territory of Russia.¹⁰²

Three years and several drafts later, the text titled ‘on the formulation and development of the international transport corridors in the territory of Russia’ was publicly discussed in the government and finally, on December 5, 2001, the same text with a few changes and additions was approved as the ‘sub-programme on the international transport corridors’ comprising a part of the *Federal Target Programme ‘the Modernization of the Transport System of Russia’*. Thus, we have come full circle from the occasion of the government session on September 7, 2000 to the government directive that formally set the process in motion three years earlier. The latter event accomplished and institutionalized what was initiated in 1997.

The instance of the assignment of the new status of ‘international transport corridor’ establishes a set of criteria constitutive of the ‘international transport corridor’. The criteria are what is expressed with the locution ‘X counts as Y’ in the Searlean formula. The criteria (assigned according to the formula ‘X counts as Y in C’) “requires the status in order that it is performed”.¹⁰³ This is a feature of the self-referentiality of institutional reality. In this way, a set of infrastructure objects or practices acquire a new power that they did not have prior to the imposition of

¹⁰² The organizing committee headed by Minister Tsakh was responsible for the administrative work of the conference including negotiations with international organizations. The government directive did not allocate financing for the conference, instead it instructed the Ministry of Finance, Mintrans and the St. Petersburg city government to cooperate on this matter and to consult with international organizations. Government of the RF 1997b; PRAIM-TASS 25.11.1997.

¹⁰³ Searle 1995, 114.

the new status. However, it may well be that things and practices counted as a part of the 'international transport corridor' are already well established, and thus the new status function does not add anything extra and is used only as a label.

In the sub-programme on 'international transport corridors', the following 'corridors' are identified. The "North–South" corridor, for whose development 198 billion roubles was earmarked between the years 2002 and 2010; the "East–West" Corridor (Trans-Siberian route) that would gain a total of 243 billion roubles during the same period; and subsequently, those sections of the "pan-European corridor IX" that were not already included in the "North–South" corridor were allocated 22 billion roubles, and routes belonging to part of "pan-European corridor I" 1,5 billion roubles.¹⁰⁴ In the next chapter I will open up the criteria in accordance with which the above-mentioned 'corridors' were assigned this status.

13.3 Definition of criteria for the development of 'international transport corridors' on the territory of Russia

The following statement from the 'international transport corridors' sub-programme identifies the criteria assigned to a transport route in order for it to count as an 'international transport corridor'.

An international transport corridor includes, as a rule, the most technically advanced, existing main communication routes (*magistral*) and infrastructure objects in which foreign trade and transit flows are concentrated, as well as those parts of the Russian transport network that have good prospects for drawing the above-mentioned flows.¹⁰⁵

The above definition illustrates the self-referential feature of institutional facts, for the statement about the new status in this case trivially implies the corresponding function.¹⁰⁶ Here we may note the following. First, the range of linkages that qualify for the status of 'international transport corridor' include, as a rule, the 'main communication routes', *magistral* in Russian. By definition (see chapter

¹⁰⁴ Mintrans 2001b, 8. Between 2002 and 2005 the total amount of financing for the programme was around 30 million roubles. Government of the RF 2001c, 163–164, 568–569.

¹⁰⁵ Mintrans 2001b, 20. This is a slightly modified version of the definition first published in Arsenov et al. 2001, 44. In later versions, the main "domestic flows" are also mentioned together with the foreign trade and transit flows.

¹⁰⁶ Searle 1995, 114.

9.1.2), a main railway line, a wide street with intensive traffic in a large city, a main electricity or telecommunications cable, or a main pipeline (gas, water, etc) count as this type of route.¹⁰⁷ The notion of ‘infrastructure object’ in this case refers to the “border-crossing points, customs posts, terminals, existing and planned seaports, and airports that provide for passenger and cargo traffic along the international transport corridors”.¹⁰⁸

The above criteria establish features of the ‘international transport corridor’ in terms of its *location* vis-à-vis the transport network and the type of cargo flow in question (foreign trade and transit). Transit in this case is defined as:

Carriage through the national territory (of Russia) of cargo destined for the third countries on a regular basis along the ‘transit corridors’ that are specially meant (*prednaznachennyh*) for this type of communication.¹⁰⁹

The six criteria listed below name additional features that a particular route must have to qualify as an *international transport corridor*.¹¹⁰ The route should:

- f1: Coincide with the main directions of international transport connections agreed by the international community;
- f2: Use to the full any existing, technically well-equipped transport routes that have significant reserves for freight capacity;
- f3: Maintain a competitive price level through the entire freight journey;
- f4: Maintain a competitive (in comparison with the alternative routes) speed of delivery from the point of production to the point of consumption;
- f5: Maintain the appropriate transport service quality, including security, punctuality of delivery, cargo warranty, and information concerning the location of the cargo at any given moment of its delivery;
- f6: Guarantee intermodal transport on the basis of logistical principles and modern information systems (i.e. GPS).¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ Vvedenskii, B.A. (et al., ed.) 1954, 605; Prohorov, A.M. (et al., ed.) 1977, 151; Kuznetsov, S. (et al., ed.) 2001.

¹⁰⁸ Arsenov et al. 2001, 44; Mintrans 2001b, 11.

¹⁰⁹ Frank 2000b.

¹¹⁰ The documents cited above explicitly state that the criteria form the basis upon which the “system of international transport corridors in Russia” are defined. Frank 2000d; Mintrans 2001b, 20; also Arsenov et al. 2001, 38–39.

¹¹¹ Mintrans 2001b. The same criteria with some minor modifications were already defined in the speech given by Minister Frank at the Russian government session 7.9.2000. Frank 2000d.

The first two criteria (f1–f2) point to the appropriate *agentive context(s)* in terms of which specific routes and the set of infrastructure objects are identified as part of an 'international transport corridor'. The first agentive context is an unspecified 'international community'. It comprises the agentive contexts of the 'pan-European corridors' and the corridors defined in the UN/ECE framework.¹¹² This criterion is in effect an iteration where the former level status Y (the pan-European corridor) becomes a new agentive context C for the definition of a new status ('Russian international transport corridor'). Similarly, the second criterion (f2) recognizes the *magistral* status as a key referent in the definition of the new status of 'corridor'.

The rest of the criteria (f3–f6) point to the features that the route must have for it to qualify as an 'international transport corridor'. The criteria *define a range of policy actions* envisioned as appropriate for the development of the corridors. At the federal policy level, the envisioned actions are in the sphere of the *tariff policy* (f3), the *normative-legislative basis of the international transport operations* (f4, f5) and the *technical rules and regulations* of transportation in general (f5, f6). The extent and way in which international agreements concerning, for example, customs formalities or the availability of GPS systems in international transport are incorporated in the implementation of these policy frameworks will say something about the level and quality of the integration between Russian and international (European) transport systems.

Here I have merely presented the criteria as they appear in the key policy documents briefly introduced above. The next task is to examine the potential referents created and ascertain whether the use of the newly formulated concept had any consequences at the policy-implementation level. In other words, was the new approach invested with sufficient authority to change the way in which things were done in the transport sphere? And what kinds of actions become possible or required due to the creation of the new referent 'international transport corridor'? Since these are the crucial questions of the study I will proceed very slowly.

The first thing to note is the compatibility between the idea of *rebuilding* used both in the context of the 'pan-European corridor' development and in the context of Russian 'international transport corridors'. The following statement helps in crystallizing this point.

International transport routes cross our country along the shortest distance, with the minimal number of crossings over the state border, and on a territory that comprises a united legal space, thus providing

¹¹² Mintrans 2000; Mintrans 2001b; Frank 2000b; Frank 2000d; Frank 2000e.

for a faster delivery of goods. In addition, in the directions of the main international freight flows Russia has a well-developed network of railways and waterways with a transport capability reserve, as well as a developing network of motorways, allowing us to avoid the large investments needed for the rebuilding (*obustroistvo*) of the international corridors.¹¹³

What is suggested is that the development of the Russian ‘international transport corridors’ is not about rebuilding in the sense of large investments in the building of *new* infrastructures, but it is rebuilding in the sense of a *rearrangement* of the existing set of infrastructure objects. In a similar fashion, the reasoning presented in the framework of the ‘pan-European transport corridor IX’ focused, besides investments in the improvement of the road network, on the harmonization of administrative practices (e.g. customs administration) and on the facilitation of the technological compatibility of the Russian and European transport systems.¹¹⁴ The anticipated result in both cases was faster, more reliable and safer transportation between Russia and its major (European) trading partners. Although a simple technical innovation (e.g. the application of GPS technologies in the monitoring of goods along the specific ‘corridor’) often brings about improvements in this sphere, it is not enough.

The presumption in the argumentation is that the practices and infrastructures constitutive of the ‘corridors’ are steps taken towards the emergence of “civilized markets” in the transportation services in Russia. The usage of term civilized refers to the set of institutions and practices that *regulate* the agencies (e.g. private forwarders) involved in the freight markets. However, as was pointed out in the above discussion, the competitiveness of Russia in the sphere of international (transit) transport included features of the ‘state agency’ guiding the process in accordance with its ‘strategic interests’. Compared to the above interpretation of the idea of rebuilding, the reasoning in terms of the state strategic interests perceived the rebuilding of the Russian international transport corridors primarily as a matter of building new ports and terminals to serve the growing foreign trade and transit transport flows. The locus of the policy in this latter sense was independency from, rather than interdependency on, the infrastructures of the adjacent countries and regions.

¹¹³ Government of the RF 2000a.

¹¹⁴ In Finland, however, the development of Corridor IX was closely linked with the building of new sections of a motorway (E18) between Turku and the border with Russia, and also the building of a new railway section (“oikorata”) between Kerava and Lahti.

In the formulation of the policy on 'international transport corridors' the new conceptualization was presented as a new aspect of Russian economic policy. As will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, this new aspect was the *attention* paid to the transport and infrastructure development, in comparison with the Soviet period. In the Soviet economic policy, transport was regarded more as an invisible part of the 'economic organism'. However, referring to the corridors as "veins in the blood circulation system" is reminiscent of this background, although in the new context the importance of these veins in the 'body of Russia' was considered in the context of providing Russian markets with cheaper imported goods.¹¹⁵ My purpose in the next chapter is to identify the set of explicit and non-explicit assumptions that form the background against which the usage of the term 'international transport corridor' in the context of Russian politics unfolds.

In the main, the background is 'an order cast in iron': a transport and infrastructure system designed for the needs of the planned economy. I should emphasize that my discussion on the Soviet transport policies is far from comprehensive. It is focused on identifying how 'an order cast in iron' is present in the current formulations of the policy on international transport corridors.

¹¹⁵ IA Rosbalt 14.11.2001.

IV

The Background: An Order Cast in Iron



The Riga Sea Port, Riga, Latvia, December 2002. Photograph by the author.

14 Rational planning of distances in the Soviet Union

14.1 Active changing of the world

The Soviet Union, which occupies one sixth of the earth's terrestrial surface, no longer consists of separate pieces bound together by the policeman's baton and the soldier's bayonet. The Soviet Union has become an indivisible economic organism, where even the most remote sections are linked to the centre and all the other regions. Economic, administrative and cultural co-operation, plus the participation of all regions and districts without exception in the social and economic life of the whole Soviet Union, and plus the process of involving new regions that were once backward borderlands into economic and cultural activity – all this creates a tremendous growth in passenger traffic.¹

Iron, as noted by Walter Benjamin, was the first artificial building material, and from the beginning it was used in arcades, exhibition halls and railway stations – places serving “transitory purposes”. Benjamin quotes A.G. Meyer, who observed that this very artificiality of iron inspired “certain distrust just because it was not immediately furnished by nature”. But for this very reason it was “revolutionary building material”. Iron construction was the proof of man's power to mould nature. Thus, the locomotive that was compatible only with iron tracks became the symbol of modernization and provided the opportunity to create an assemblage that had power over space.² Paul Virilio characterized this revolution as a *dromocratic* one because:

What was invented was [...] a means of fabricating speed with the steam engine, then the combustion engine. And so they can pass from the age of brakes to the age of the accelerator. In other words, power will be invested in acceleration itself.³

In the Soviet Union, Marx's theory on capital accumulation was not only rejected, but an alternative model was developed under the socialist state economy. The planned economic model was designed as a practical solution to the denial of markets and the inherent dynamics of capital accumulation. With the task of building a new society, a distinctive feature of which was that it had a non-

¹ The USSR in Construction 1932:8.

² Benjamin 1999, 4, 154.

³ Paul Virilio cited in Der Derian 1990, 307; cf. Virilio 1986.

capitalist, non-market-based economy, the communist planners were striving to transform the Russian troika into a powerful locomotive, and to turn the agrarian landscape into a network of electrified, mechanized and urbanized production sites.⁴ In Lenin's vision, decaying railways would be replaced by new electric transport tracks; new roads would spread throughout the land, a new and happier Communist industrialism would emerge. The space composed of assemblages – things such as roads, railways, bridges, and buildings – was to be remade to embody the new socialist order.⁵ But what type of artefacts would best suit the new socialist reality? How to assemble things anew not only to *reflect* the new socialist fashion, but also to change the existing material basis of society completely?

This is not the place to discuss at length why Marx rejected the market, how Lenin sought to correct Marx's analysis of imperialism, and what all this had to do with the thesis "Socialism in One Country". In the following I will explain how they were interlinked in the concept of the unified transport system that gave the Soviet transport policy its peculiar character. The starting point lies in Marx's theory of capital accumulation and especially in that part of the theory which touches on the spatial dimension of capital.

"Capital", according to Marx, "is not a thing or a set of institutions; it is a process of circulation between production and realization"⁶. The accumulation is the engine, which powers growth and which makes the capitalist system highly dynamic and expansionary. Consequently, the imperative to accumulate also implies the imperative to overcome spatial barriers. Harvey provides a useful commentary on the spatial dimension of Marx's theory of accumulation. Marx's own writings on the subject were fragmentary, and as argued by Harvey, lacked a systematic and distinctively geographical dimension.⁷ Lenin and other theorists of imperialism tried to overcome this error by linking the logic of capitalist exploitation with a *particular* place in time. Lenin as a revolutionary leader spoke first and foremost about people in one place exploiting and struggling against those in another place. According to Harvey,

⁴ Stephen Kotkin shows in his study of Magnitogorsk how the building of a giant steel plant, and subsequently the city of Magnitogorsk, was a process of constant negotiation between reality and the principles of the new socialist society. Kotkin brings up the rift between would-be change and the continuity of everyday practices (of corruption, family life, working habits etc). Kotkin 1997; cf. Bordiougov 2000.

⁵ Wells 1920, 135–136.

⁶ Harvey 2001, 265.

⁷ Harvey 2001, 119.

Privileging specific spatial structures (e.g. centre and periphery, city and the countryside) as sources of explanation coexists uneasily with Marx's view of a capitalist dynamic powered by the exploitation of one class by another. This makes the theoretical foundations of Marxism-Leninism ambiguous and prone to disputes that obscure things even more: such as the question concerning the prospects for socialism in one country or the significance of geographical decentralization in political practice.⁸

The building of the new socialist reality required the assembling of existing infrastructures all over again. The central idea of the First Five Year Plan, and Soviet-type modernization in general, was the rapid industrialization of the country on the basis of large-scale heavy industry. The decision to prioritize the development of heavy industry, together with the collectivization of agriculture was, to a large extent, a blueprint for the building of socialism in the country.⁹ In turn, the GOELRO plan, the electrification of the whole country, was seen as a step towards large-scale industrialization and modernization – the re-equipment and reorganization of industry, transport and agriculture, “on the basis of socialism”.¹⁰ Following Marx, transport was regarded as a unitary whole within the framework of the production cycle of the economy.¹¹ In typical Soviet terms:

Transport is the common property of the people and is a constituent part of the single socialist system of economy. The systematic, proportional development of the socialist economy conditions the rational development and distribution of all forms of transport over the territory of the country. The distribution of the transport in its turn fosters a systematic distribution of production all over the country... Unlike the elemental and anarchic development of the means of transportation in the capitalist countries, the railways, waterways, automobile and air transport have developed in the USSR as a single system of transportation which systematically combines all forms of transport and works in accordance with a plan established by the state.¹²

⁸ Harvey 2001, 119.

⁹ Carr 1970, 378.

¹⁰ The top priority in railway electrification were the lines in Southern Russia, especially in the Donbas region. The electrification of lines in the centre and in the Urals came second and third in the priority list. Main-line electrification took place in the thirties. Westwood 1964.

¹¹ This point is made by Westwood with regard to the railways in particular. See Westwood 1964, 8; Westwood 2002, 3.

¹² Mellor 1975, 76.

In the above extract, it is assumed that in the socialist system transport is, in essence, more rationally organized than in the capitalist system. An essential question concerns what was considered *rational* in this context. Furthermore, what were the criteria for the *rational distribution* of all forms of transport? The explanation again begins with Marx, and Engels.

14.2 Engels' dictum

Marx rejected the market on the basis that it was not rationally understandable. The fluctuations of the market were not accessible to scientific understanding, and therefore the market, in accordance with the left Hegelian dialectic, was irrational and ought to be rejected.¹³ Instead, the criteria of rationality of the objectives sought and their implementation were defined by the centralized planning in the command economy. Following Gregory Grossman's definition, a command economy is one in which "the individual firms produce and employ resources primarily by virtue of specific directives (commands, targets) from some higher authorities".¹⁴

The emphasis on the planning coincided with the decision registered by the fourteenth party conference in December 1925 to promote the metal industry. The planning and development of heavy industry were two sides of the same coin. "The development of heavy industry," writes Edward Hallet Carr, "meant planning, and planning meant, first and foremost, the development of heavy industry." Until the fourteenth party congress, the controversy over planning raged within the party, but when the expansion of heavy industry was announced as a principal party objective it was clear, as shown by Carr, that the advocates of planning had won.¹⁵

In command economy parlance, the geographical location of productive forces would not be developed *unevenly* or *irrationally*. By *irrational*, Soviet planners meant the concentration of industry in those regions of the country where it yielded the quickest and greatest profits.¹⁶ Instead, the "Great October Socialist Revolution", explains General Andrey Lagovskiy, "which eliminated the capitalist mode of production in our country, also put an end to the irrational location

¹³ Megill 2002, 164, 173.

¹⁴ Grossman 1963, 104.

¹⁵ Carr 1970, 21–541; cf. Grossman 1963, 107.

¹⁶ Hill and Gaddy 2003, 90.

of newly constructed industrial enterprises. In the process of the construction of socialism, the ugly legacy of the capitalist location of productive forces was gradually liquidated, although it has not yet been completely overcome.”¹⁷

Distance was not counted as one of the planning criteria for the new industrial areas. In fact, “the Soviet policy on transport and industrial infrastructure in general”, writes Russian economist Goritsheva “was based on a denial of geographical factors”.¹⁸ Consistent with the above-mentioned conceptualization of rationality, it was maintained that “[the] economic activity should be *evenly distributed* throughout the union so as to ensure maximum utilization of infrastructure, natural and labour resources”. It was also emphasized that the “choices of locations for production must be consistent with the need to strengthen the defensive capacities of the USSR”.¹⁹

The concept of a “unified transport system” had its basis in the so-called ‘Engels dictum’: Engels’ contention was that large-scale industry should be “freed from the restrictions of space” and be equally distributed within and across a socialist country.

Large-scale industry...has thereby to a considerable extent freed production from the restrictions of place...society liberated from the barriers of capitalist production can go much further still... the abolition of the separation between town and country is therefore not utopian, even in so far as it presupposes the most equal distribution possible of large-scale industry over the whole country. It is true that in the huge towns civilization had bequeathed us a heritage to rid ourselves of which will take much time and trouble. But this heritage must and will be got rid of, however protracted the process may be.²⁰

Formulated as a practical policy recommendation, it was asserted that “the means of transportation on most occasions do not determine the choice of region and site for the construction of iron and steel works”. On the contrary, the “construction of the metallurgical works determines the organization of the corresponding system of transport connections”.²¹ The words of the head of the planning commission, Gleb M. Krzhizhanovsky, from 1929 expressed the same idea accordingly:

¹⁷ Cited in Hill and Gaddy 2003, 90.

¹⁸ Goricheva 2004, 58.

¹⁹ Kirkow 1998, 26.

²⁰ Cited in Hill and Gaddy 2003, 89.

²¹ Rees 1995, 30.

In the five-year plan as promulgated ...there are two especially crucial points: ...agriculture...and *the proper linking together of the energies of each major economic region*. In the latter, we are taking the line of concentrating freight traffic on the basic routes, trunk lining them technically, and lowering the cost of shipping the mass freights. In this way we hope *to change the whole face of our industrial geography*, regardless of the difficulties of distance. In our hands, transport is a more powerful means than with the bourgeoisie, but it is *a means, not an end in itself*.²²

Much later, the Minister of Transport, Igor Levitin, reflected on the past experience and criticized the Russian practice of embarking on the construction of large industrial towns without adequate consideration for how they are situated in terms of the local and foreign markets, or even worse, for how they can be reached from the adjacent regions and by their local residents.²³

14.3 The centralized organization of freight flows

In the Soviet economic environment, the transport and infrastructure system was designed to meet the needs of the command economy. Like the rest of the state administration, the transport branch was divided into two separate but overlapping bureaucracies: the state structures and the Communist Party. The former included the Council of Ministers, ministries, enterprises, Gosplan and the councils (*soveti*) at all three levels of administration (central, regional, local). The ministry was usually in charge of a single branch, whereas the state committee functioned more as a horizontal agency cutting across a number of branches. What is of importance is that there was no clear-cut division between the domain of politics and that of administration.²⁴ In the transport branch, the ministries

²² In Hunter 1957, 46.

²³ *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* 29.4.2005. The Magnitogorsk metallurgical factory built in the late 1920s is a case in point, as it initially had no effective rail connection to the main railway network, and the people living in the area had great difficulty getting to the new “Steel town” in the Urals. See Kotkin 1997.

²⁴ For example, Hough and Fainsod have estimated that in 1965 50 to 70 per cent of ministerial officials were party members. Although in general the administrative bureaucracy was formed in accordance with principles opposed to the Weberian model, where the emphasis is on a strict functional-hierarchical division of labour between politics and administration, the authors showed that at least at the top ministerial level career paths were carved on the basis of performance rather than political criteria. Hough and Fainsod 1979, 385–386. For studies on changes in the Soviet administration brought about by Gorbachev’s economic reforms and thereafter, see Shleifer and Treisman 2000, 29; Kordonskii 2000; Heusala 2005.

had the key regulatory and managerial function for each mode of transport. The ministries of civil aviation, railways and the merchant marine fleet held the all-union status, whereas ministries at the level of the union republics handled inland waterways, and lorry transport.²⁵

The principal agencies responsible for policy planning in the transport sphere were Gosplan (The State Planning Committee created in 1921) and, after the mid-1960s, the State Committee for Material Technical Supply, Gossnab, as well as the ministries that were charged with overseeing the organization of inter-enterprise relations within a branch industry. The main objectives of the planning institutions were to *minimize* the transport flows, and second, to *control* both the freight and passenger traffic. In practice, this resulted in the concentration of the freight flows in the well-established ‘corridors’, most often comprising the main railway lines crossing the country.²⁶ Consequently, the planning for the volume of traffic in railway transport was not calculated by the Ministry of Ways and Communications (NKPS) but was subordinate to the plans for the various sectors of the economy.²⁷ This meant that “whatever traffic was produced the railways had to carry it and the allocation of resources to transport was limited strictly to the minimum amount necessary to enable the increments of traffic to be moved. The NKPS and the railways only planned the distribution and the handling of the traffic”.²⁸

The distribution control system prevented enterprises from developing their own trading links. This was accomplished by the practice of “zoning” freight movement and commodity distribution. In accordance with this practice, an enterprise (a mine, industrial plant, and so forth) was assigned a specific (railway) route to use, and beyond which it could not ship its products.²⁹ A further factor, contributing to the vertical dependence among enterprises and to the segmented industrial structure of the Soviet economy, was that inter-enterprise exchanges (including freight transport) were organized in accordance with the Ministerial structure.³⁰

²⁵ Heywood 2002, 3.

²⁶ Williams 1962, 72–73; Brown, Ickes and Ryterman 1994, 31.

²⁷ Rees 1995, 29; Westwood 1964, 253.

²⁸ Less than 2 per cent of the traffic was planned at the local railway level. The essential part of the plan originated at the centre. In the late 1950s the system was changed in such a way that over a third of the traffic was planned at the local level together with the railways, sovmarkhoz and other local planning organs. Westwood 1964, 253, 255–256; on the industrial planning system in general see e.g. Nove 1962.

²⁹ Williams 1962, 72–73.

³⁰ Brown, Ickes and Ryterman 1994, 31.

The key practice in the organization of the freight flows was called *marshrut*, and it was first introduced in the late 1930s. It meant faster speed of delivery for certain key commodities (coal, oil, ferrous metals, ore, timber, firewood, grain, and mineral building materials), which comprised the bulk of the total railway freight traffic. The carriage of these eight types of freight was centrally planned and, when possible, reconstructed lines were used. The most advanced trains carried only one type of goods and travelled from point of origin to destination without any delays at sorting yards or at the boundaries separating the different railways. The real costs of long hauls were not taken into consideration and the transport of key commodities was operated at below-cost tariffs instead. The practice was made possible due to the “concentration of transport demand on a limited number of trunk lines” as well as on a “relatively simple commodity flow of a narrow range of items in large quantities”.³¹

In the new railway charter, approved in 1998, the *marshrut* was no longer compulsory and the word itself was replaced by the new term “direct mixed traffic” (*pryamoi smeshannom soobshchenii*). It means shipment of goods by different modes of transport without re-registration (*pereoformleniya*) of the required papers. As early as the beginning of the 1990s, the majority of the transport flows were more or less of the “mixed sort”, meaning that shipments were carried by two or more modes of transport.³² The new term is equivalent to the internationally used term “inter-modal transportation”.³³ However, the older version is still frequently used in everyday speech when referring to small buses in the public transport system (*marshrutka*), as well as in connection with specially organized transit trains, such as those on the trans-Siberian railway.

The above discussion highlights what Russian geographer Vladimir Kaganskii later called the peculiarity of the Soviet space. This peculiarity was attributed to the fact that in the Soviet period: “faraway was close at hand, whereas nearby was distant. Distances in the landscape were not linked with the distances in physical space but were tied to status or position in the power structure”. On the contrary, the “whole space: place and position, relations and connections, distances,

³¹ Westwood 1964.

³² In railway transport, 35 per cent of shipments were combined with road transport and 80 per cent of cargo transport started out on or was destined for industrial transport. Galaburdy 1996, 210. For more on industrial railways see Westwood 2002, 38–39.

³³ The term *intermodal transport* is defined as “the movement of goods in one and the same loading unit or road vehicle, which uses successively two or more modes of transport without handling the goods themselves in changing modes”. United Nations 2001, 16–18. For a detailed discussion on the new railway charter see Westwood 2002, 97–99; Sivakov et al. 2001, 357–362.

directions were differentiated according to the (specific) status. Place in the space is (the same as) status in the state”.³⁴ What the communist planners struggled to create, and for a while even succeeded in creating, was “absolute space”. It consisted of the territorial and functional components that were hierarchically organized into a “hyper-centralized structure enveloping the whole territory”.³⁵

For the majority of people, the Soviet space was narrow and crowded. “Wide areas of the vast country”, Christoph Neidhart writes, “were off limits and people’s movements were severely restricted. Wherever one went – sooner rather than later – one bumped into a wall, a fence, or some other barrier, or was stopped by guards. Access to almost any building required a *propusk*, a special permit.”³⁶ However, parallel to the rigid centralization, one could discern traces of a more diffuse spatial order. The days-long queues to shops, years-long queues for permission to obtain a flat, car or some other commodity exemplify the simultaneous existence of rigid, hierarchically ordered distances and the relational, soft distance in the practice of queuing.³⁷ This ‘soft’ distance is what Gaddy and Ickes call “relational capital”³⁸ and it is what finally made the Soviet absolute space liveable.

15 The new contours of Russian economic space

15.1 From planning to selling change in location

In the early 1990s, market thinking replaced the Gosplan directives, which had lost their force and rationality along with the Soviet Union.³⁹ During a brief period in 1990 the old and new ways of looking at things coexisted. Westwood explains this change by saying that “the old fixation about fulfilling or over fulfilling

³⁴ Kaganskii 2001, 137.

³⁵ Kaganskii 2001, 137, 170; Kaganskii 1995, 50; Yurchak 2006, 37. On spread and settlement in Russian and Soviet history see Paperny 1985; Paperny 2002. On Russian space see e.g. Smith 1999; Stites 1999; Medvedev 1997.

³⁶ Neidhart 2003, 117.

³⁷ Sorokin 1991.

³⁸ Gaddy and Ickes 2002, 57.

³⁹ On the transformation of state authority and its failures and successes see Gregory and Schrettl 2003, 84; Stoner-Weiss 2006, 28–30; Shleifer and Treisman 2000; Hanson 2007; Hanson 2006.

the Plan, and especially the plan for traffic carried, still dominated managerial minds, but those minds were already pondering the best ways of coping with the encroaching market economy; that is, with an environment in which traffic and the means of carrying that traffic were no longer delivered automatically but had to be sought”.⁴⁰

However, features of the old system persisted well into the 1990s. According to a study published in 1994, “much of the distribution system is organized by wholesale organizations, many of which are vestiges of the system of central planning”. The barriers to trade established by local and regional administrations, on the other hand, reflect the old thinking on the “zoning” of the transport flows.⁴¹ The point is that there is nothing intrinsic in the freight tariff rate that would be readily convertible to the ‘market principle’ or the ‘method of authoritative directives’. It is always a matter of bargaining, and the tariff policies consequently form the very locus of the restructuring of Russia’s economic space, and the country as a whole.

In the Soviet period, railway tariffs on the domestic routes were the same in every part of the country. In January 1992 four tariff groups were introduced as a part of the economic reforms known as shock therapy: ‘through tariffs’ that were regulated by the state committee on prices, the ‘inter-commonwealth tariffs’ covering shipments between the Former Soviet Union (FSU) countries and regulated by various committees and the Railway Transport Council, the ‘through less-than-carload’ tariffs regulated by the Russian Ministry of Transport, and finally, the ‘local tariffs’ that were fixed by the local branch of Railways to a maximum profit of 35 per cent.⁴² By the end of 1992 tariffs were 43 times higher than in 1990, but in comparison with diesel fuel, which had risen 155-fold, and the 76-fold rise in electric power, the figure seems quite low.⁴³

The increase in tariff rates and the diminishing level of production were two major factors influencing the drastic drop in traffic volumes. For example, freight flows on the Ministry-operated industrial railways dropped from 17.1 billion

⁴⁰ Westwood 2002, 14; Rodgers 1990, 218.

⁴¹ Brown, Ickes and Ryterman 1994, 31.

⁴² The elaboration of the new tariff policy in Russia has been accompanied by efforts to coordinate tariffs within the post-Soviet space in the CIS framework. The draft concept for a coordinated transport policy of CIS countries introduced in April 2001 called for the creation of a “united tariff policy” in the CIS and special “tariff corridors” were duly designed to facilitate further integration within the CIS. The scheme envisioned in the draft concept prioritized the rehabilitation of former Soviet era ties e.g. by arranging “through rates” for bulk traffic within the CIS area. *Kontseptsiya* 2001, 32–36.

⁴³ Westwood 2002, 175–177; *Kontseptsiya* 2001, 35.

tons in 1992 to 7.3 billion tons in 1997.⁴⁴ The traffic decline that began in 1989 was “doubly disturbing”, writes Westwood “for it represented a failure to fulfill the sacrosanct Plan and it presaged a future in which falling traffic might throw doubts upon the primacy of railway transport”.⁴⁵ The emergence of new market conditions pushed railways as well as other modes of transport to seek trans-shipments: “to sell change in location”, as Karl Marx wrote in *Das Kapital*.⁴⁶

What the *market* amounted to in the beginning was a set of arrangements between the Ministry of Railways, other federal and regional agencies and the privatized or still state-owned enterprises. As an example of one of the arrangements, the Minister of Railways, Gennadi Fadeev, cited in an interview in 1994 a practice by which the Railways were to carry Kuzbas coal for export at a fifty per cent discount on the condition that the payment was made in advance and in dollars.⁴⁷ The arrangement by which Kuzbas coal reached international markets is only one, albeit typical, example of the “rational (if defective) responses to the irrational environment”.⁴⁸

The lack of transparency in counting the tariff coefficient for specific commodity or bulk goods, and in the trans-shipment services offered in general, partly explains how it has been possible for the Soviet manufacturing and industrial enterprises to survive by “adapting to the new environment, but not to the market”.⁴⁹ This is generally explained with the concepts of “the shadow economy”, the world of underground, unregistered and unreported economic activities, which all point to the phenomenon whereby companies are not inclined to reduce their *market distance* but instead invest in *relational capital* and continue to produce the wrong things in the wrong place.⁵⁰

Some analysts have suggested a radical restructuring of Russia’s economic geography as a solution for enhancing the international competitiveness of the country. “To become competitive economically and to achieve sustainable growth”, Fiona Hill and Clifford Gaddy write, “Russia needs to “*shrink*”. It must

⁴⁴ The volume of rail freight had reduced by a half by 1994 and returned to the level of 60 per cent after peaking in 1998. Today it is showing a strong upward trend. *Moskovskie Novosti* 29.6.1994; *Transport Rossii* 1998:2.

⁴⁵ Westwood 2002, 14.

⁴⁶ Cited in Harvey 2001, 243.

⁴⁷ *Rossiiskaya Gazeta* 12.5.1994.

⁴⁸ Gustafson 1999, 26. Cf. Gaddy and Ickes 2002.

⁴⁹ Gaddy and Ickes 2002, 44.

⁵⁰ Hill and Gaddy 2003, 5; Gaddy 2007.

contract not its territory (its physical geography), but its economic geography.”⁵¹ Researchers argue that simply reconstructing the existing transport system and with it the connections between cities located in places, especially in Siberia, where they should not have been in the first place, is not a viable option in terms of Russia’s economic competitiveness. This is because doing away with the “atlas of non-usable roads” (*atlas bezdorozh’ya*) would not make those regions economically more viable. Rather, the improved transport infrastructure would make it easier to ship out natural resources, while people living in the regions would remain cut off from any meaningful participation in the Russian, as well as the global economy.⁵²

15.2 The new locus of transport policy

In the context of the Russian discussion on this topic there is no referent for the ‘wrong place’. Instead the words ‘efficiency’, ‘quality’ and ‘competitiveness’ convey a sophisticated way of arguing for the preservation of the integrity of Russia and the improvement of the country’s competitive position vis-à-vis international markets. On the occasion of the ten-year anniversary of the Ministry of Transport in 2000, Minister of Transport Sergei Frank elaborated on what was meant by efficiency and quality when it came to the transport services:

It is not just a question of economic indexes. In order to be efficient, transport enterprises have to be beautiful and dynamic. They need to be not only attractive business partners but also a source of pride for their town, region and all those workers. There are already many such enterprises, but

⁵¹ Hill and Gaddy 2003, 5.

⁵² A good case in point to illustrate what is meant here is the Baikal-Amur Railway (BAM). The rail link was completed in 1989 but communities adjacent to the railway have had little opportunity to sustain themselves. The problems with the BAM stem mainly from the fact that the projected boom in West Siberian oil failed to materialize and since there was nothing else for the railway to carry, a maximum of 5 trains out of 60 dispatched daily from Komsomol’sk rolled along the BAM. According to the World Bank, 8 per cent of the annual revenue of the Russian Railways went towards supporting the BAM railway. New possibilities for the BAM are envisioned due to the need to increase oil export capacities to the Asia Pacific region. At the same time, the completion of the construction of the railway (e.g. the Severo–Muisik tunnel in 2004) leaves open the question of what to do with the worker settlements spread along the length of the railway during the past thirty years. Moscow News 12.7.2004; Novaya Gazeta 28.2.2005; Segodnya 21.2.1995; Ward 2001, 9; Ezhegodnik Bolshoi Sovetskoi Entsiklopedii 1985, 33; Mote 1990, 326; Hill and Gaddy 2003, 198.

the challenge is to ensure that the whole (transport) branch becomes like that.⁵³

Later in the same speech, Minister Frank envisioned the role of the Ministry as a guarantor of the “unity of the country and the unhindered development of the economy and trade”.⁵⁴ He asserted that the special task of the Ministry was to:

turn the territory of Russia into a united transport space, to guarantee the necessary level of mobility for all categories of people, and the transport accessibility of the regions. On this basis, transport will function in a safe and ecologically optimal way.⁵⁵

In his speech Minister Frank refers explicitly to the situation at the turn of the nineteenth century when “Russia moved out from the epoch of internal chaos (*smuta*) and international isolation and became a developing economy that was one of the leading European powers (*derzhav*)”.⁵⁶ The establishment of the Ministry of Transport of the Russian Federation in July 1990 is linked with the Manifest on Governance of Water and Land Communications that was issued by Tsar Alexander I (1801–1825) in 1809.⁵⁷ The new government agency the Main Administration of Waterways and Land Communications established by the Manifest was part of the larger reform policies outlined, but not implemented, during Alexander’s reign.⁵⁸

The reference to the tsar’s Manifest was used in promoting the role of the Ministry of Transport vis-à-vis the Ministry of Railways and other agencies involved in the policy-making. The reference to the tsar’s Manifest was meant to reinforce the Ministry’s standing as the locus of federal transport policy-making

⁵³ Transport Rossii 24.7.–6.8.2000. Similar rhetoric is also used in the OAO Russian Railways public statements emphasising the company’s responsibility towards the communities where it is located and care for all the railway workers irrespective of whether they happen to work for companies other than the Russian Railways. Kommersant 6.8.2005.

⁵⁴ Transport Rossii 24.7.–6.8.2000.

⁵⁵ Transport Rossii 24.7.–6.8. 2000. The argumentation is also repeated in Mintrans 2004c, 5. See also Frank 2000b; Frank 2000d.

⁵⁶ Frank 2000e.

⁵⁷ An extract from the Manifest published as a part of Frank’s speech is compared with a longer extract from the Manifest cited in Sivakov, O.V. et al. 2001, 18.

⁵⁸ The creation of the new administrative agency was aimed at facilitating efforts to enlarge the cultivated areas, promote industrial modernization and help in attracting more inhabitants to the capital. The first railway in Russia was built to the Tsar’s summer palace in the early 1840s. In the summertime the railway station at Tsarskoe Selo functioned as a classical music concert hall where St. Petersburg society gathered. Figs 2003, 84; Chernukha and Anan’ich 1995, 55–56; Westwood 1964.

and administration. In 1990, the separate branch ministries and the republic level ministries for different modes of transport were abolished and the Ministry of Transport of the Russian Federation was established in their stead. In the first instance, it administered the development of the sea, river, air, motor, urban public and industrial transport, as well as the road infrastructure. An exception to this general rule was the Ministry of Railways, which had the status of a federal-level ministry in the new administrative structure.⁵⁹

The amalgamation of the two Ministries was finally completed in March 2004 when the Ministry of Railways was combined with the Ministry of Transport. This move was part of the major reorganization of the federal executive bodies undertaken in March 2004. The assets of the railway (valued at €50 billion) were transferred from the Ministry to the newly founded state-owned joint stock company Russian Railways (OAO RZhD) in September 2003. The new company started its operations in October 2003. As a part of the reform, the federal executive agencies were divided into three types, each having a specific function. The three-tier hierarchy includes: those federal *ministries* that retain their function as policy-making agencies, federal *services* like supervisory and regulatory agencies, and thirdly, federal *agencies* that provide direct public services to the state and the private sector.⁶⁰

The change in the transport branch was later presented as a change ‘from the departmental method of administration to the functional, and from direct administration to direct regulation of transport activities’.⁶¹ As expressed in the Transport Strategy, the reorganization of the transport sector has included “basic structural and institutional reforms such as the establishment of the fundamental legal framework of the transport sector consistent with the new socioeconomic environment; the separation of the governance and business functions; the establishment of an adequate transport sector regulation system that befits a market economy; and the substantive completion of privatization”.⁶²

The parallel drawn between the Manifest and the new form of transport administration gives rise to a less favourable comparison as well, namely the one between the current form of “state capitalism”⁶³ emerging in Russia and the system

⁵⁹ On competition between the two ministries in the 1990s, see Westwood 2002, 222–223.

⁶⁰ OECD 2005, 45, 139.

⁶¹ Transport Rossii 24.7.–6.8. 2000.

⁶² Mintrans 2004c; Mintrans 2003a, 153–158; Mintrans 2003b.

⁶³ Riabov 2005. See the general discussion on the different economic models and administrative reform as well as the bureaucratic-authoritarianism of the Putin regime in Shevtsova 2005; Sutela 2005; Sakwa 2004.

of “feeding” (*kormlenie*) that was part of the tsarist administration. The previous system had a simple logic: the state officials were not paid a proper salary but were allowed to “feed themselves from the official businesses”.⁶⁴ Today, the rent-seeking behaviour, inefficiency and unresponsiveness of the state administration either to public or higher political authorities are listed as the main impediments in the implementation of “any policies that require administrative or regulatory capacities of a high order”.⁶⁵ In this situation, the president functions as an arbiter, or ‘manager’ to which each of the conflicting agencies are drawn.⁶⁶

Against this background, it was apt when Minister Frank concluded his Anniversary speech by repeating what Prime Minister Putin had said in December 1999:

In the future, transport has to be developed so that it stays one step ahead of the other sectors of the economy. Only this will ensure the competitive advantages of Russia in the global markets and only this will allow us to implement the main economic and – I have no hesitation in saying – the main state and state-forming function of transport.⁶⁷

The speech was given an added twist when the following was appended to the words above:

These words were from the presentation of Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin given at the all-Russian conference “Transport of Russia at the turn of century” held at the Kremlin in December last year.⁶⁸

This is one of the instances where the event in 1999 was given the status of a ‘foundational moment’ in the new policy on transport.⁶⁹ The renewed emphasis on transport and infrastructure development that was introduced between the years 1999–2000 can be traced back to the formulation of the Concept of the State Transport Politics, an idea first introduced in 1997.

⁶⁴ To ensure that officials serving in Siberia did not exceed what was considered an appropriate level of extortion, the government set up agencies on the main road leading from Siberia to Moscow charged with the task of confiscating the surplus which the returning voevody was suspected of carrying. Pipes 1992, 282.

⁶⁵ OECD 2006a, 7.

⁶⁶ Shevtsova goes further and argues that “the survival of personified leadership depended on the nonstop clan infighting that enabled a leader to play the arbiter”. Shevtsova 2005, 193.

⁶⁷ Putin 1999.

⁶⁸ Frank 2000.

⁶⁹ See chapter 16.3.

16 Putting transport ‘one step ahead of the rest of the economy’

16.1 Formulation of the concept of a state transport policy

Russian commentators have themselves suggested that we should be cautious as to whether the new policy on ‘Russian international transport corridors’ was in principle about transport and infrastructure modernization at all. As expressed by deputy prime minister Vladimir Bulgak in early 1998, the development of transport corridors was important, but it should not be permitted to supersede the resolution of departmental problems that “tend to get bogged down by numerous agreements, directives and decisions...”.⁷⁰ Bulgak’s statement points to two interfaces that are crucial for the implementation of the corridor policy. First, the status of the new policy approach vis-à-vis economic reforms, and second, the coordination of the actions of the agencies involved in policy-making in the transport sector.

The reasoning for the elaboration of the Concept of the State Transport Politics of the Russian Federation⁷¹ (*Kontseptsii gosudarstvennoi transportnoi politiki RF*) was first articulated publicly at the conference titled ‘Development of the Transport System of Russia and St. Petersburg in the context of trans-European transport politics’ organized in St. Petersburg immediately after the Pan-European Transport Conference in Helsinki in June 1997. The issue was also discussed at the press conference in Moscow a few days later where Minister of Transport Tsakh informed his audience about the ‘proceedings of the trans-European transport conference and the joining of Russia to the ECMT’.⁷²

Minister Tsakh was consistent in his comments on the concept and argued that it focused on the development of “trans-European transport corridors on the territory of Russia”. The specific projects mentioned in this connection included the building of the cargo terminals in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Rostov-na-Donu and Novorossiisk (projects which were identified earlier as part of the ‘South–Centre–Baltics’ corridor) and the building of three new ports in the Gulf

⁷⁰ Rossiiskaya Gazeta 11.2.1998.

⁷¹ The government resolution on the concept was published in Rossiiskaya Gazeta 18.9.1997.

⁷² Having participated in the work of the ECMT since 1992 as an observer, Russia gained full-member status of the organization on 1st July 1997. PRAIM-TASS 4.7.1997; Segodnya 5.7.1997.

of Finland. The reconstruction of the port of Olya on the Caspian Sea was also mentioned in this context.⁷³

The adoption of a concept ‘similar’ to the trans-European transport policy in Russia would help to “liquidate inter-departmental conflicts in solving the transport problems”, argued Minister Tsakh. The full ECMT membership functioned as a catalyst for Russian authorities to coordinate and define the ‘Russian position’ before embarking on negotiations at the international level. That, in turn, would help in getting rid of “disconnections” (*razobshchennost’*) and departmentalism at the level of decision-making.⁷⁴

The notion of ‘departmentalism’ refers to the lack of coordination, and the infighting that occurred between and within the branches of the Soviet bureaucracy and which plagued the Soviet administrative system.⁷⁵ As defined by Merle Fainsod in a book first published in 1953, those involved in ‘departmentalism’ fail to “reflect the interests of the nation as a whole” in their doings. Instead, ministries as well as their various bureaus and departments “frequently take policy positions, which represent their own interests” and “continually engage in policy conflict with other agencies who represent different interests, conflict which often spills over into the press”.⁷⁶ The point, of course, was that “inter-departmentalism” ran counter to the set of actions authorized by the Party and formalized in the Plan although circumvention of the Plan was often necessary from the point of view of its practical implementation. I will return to this issue in later chapters of the study.

Commentary in the Russian press saw the elaboration of a new concept largely as a balancing act. It was an attempt to preserve the transport system under the conditions of the emerging markets. A whole range of pressing problems, from the “liquidation of subsidized local transport” to the question of what to do to the social infrastructure belonging to the Railway Ministry, was addressed during the discussions in the government. The concept was to guide the “economic development of the country”, the “structural restructuring (*perestroika*) of the transport sphere” and the “formulation of the transport system”.⁷⁷ The reasoning was that a common and coordinated transport policy would offer a practical

⁷³ Nevskoe Vremya 1.8.1997; Delovoi Mir 1.8.1997; Telekanal ”Rossiya”, Vesti 31.7.1997; Severnyi Krai 1.8.1997.

⁷⁴ Nevskoe Vremya 1.8.1997; Delovoi Mir 1.8.1997; Telekanal ”Rossiya”, Vesti 31.7.1997.

⁷⁵ Conyngham 1982.

⁷⁶ Hough and Fainsod 1979, 387; cf. Heusala 2005, 323–333.

⁷⁷ Rossiiskie Vesti 31.7.1997; Finansovye Izvestiya 4.11.1997; PRAIM-TASS 26.6.1997; Delovoi Mir 1.8.1997; Segondya 1.8.1997; Severnyi Krai 1.8.1997.

solution for how to avoid the eventuality whereby Russia would have to sign documents that were “privately” made and not connected with “the development of the general transport system of Russia”.⁷⁸

However, the mechanism for the realization of the policy was not clarified in the concept document nor during the subsequent discussion. The only reference in this regard was to the somewhat vague notion that the relevant ministries should elaborate on and implement federal target programmes in their subsequent fields with due regard to the “fundamental tenets” of the Concept. Some commentators in the press suggested that a presidential message on transport politics would be the most effective means of directing budget planning and the formulation of the required legislation.⁷⁹

The notion of the “foreign transport policy” was articulated in a slightly more coherent way. What was initially proposed was that the general coordination of the “foreign transport policy” was to be conducted by a “united federal-administrative agency” under the patronage of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MID). The new agency would be responsible for the formulation and defence of the interests of Russia in the sphere of transport. On a very practical level, the “foreign transport policy” translated into a cooperation agreement between the Ministry of Railways and the State Customs Committee upon practices aimed at facilitating transit on the trans-Siberian Railway.⁸⁰ However, this was far from *coordinating* the actions of the government agencies in respect of the “foreign transport policy” of Russia. Against the background of the general political and economic situation in the country in the late 1990s, this was hardly surprising.

16.2 The situational context of the new concept

The new “national transport policy” concept was formulated at a time when, paraphrasing Vitaly Tretyakov, editor in-chief of *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* newspaper, “all the internal, material, and intellectual reserves of the present regime were

⁷⁸ PRAIM-TASS 26.6.1997. The news clip doesn’t mention which ‘private’ contract is being referred to here. From the situational context we may assume that it referred to the building of the port complexes, especially the port of Buhta Batareinaya in the Gulf of Finland.

⁷⁹ Rossiiskaya Gazeta 11.2.1998; Segodnya 5.7.1997; PRAIM-TASS 4.7.1997.

⁸⁰ The instruction (*ukazanie*) included, for example, the recommendation that customs officials in the Far Eastern customs district would give priority to transit cargoes dispatched along the Trans-Siberian railway, would work at weekends as well as during holidays and, when necessary, around the clock. State Customs Committee of RF1998.

exhausted completely”. He characterized 1997 as “the greatest year in modern Russian history”:

Yes, it is true that not a single question was given a constructive answer. Yes, as before, Russia may fall apart. Yes, the economy is in a state of stable stagnation and the government is completely bankrupt. But 1997 was good in that now, by all indications, the authorities, the ruling elites, have themselves become aware of this.⁸¹

As an indication, the main theme of president Yeltsin’s annual address to the Federal Assembly was “order”, that is, the lack of order in the functioning of the authorities.⁸² But, as Roy Medvedev remarked later, neither the government authorities nor the ruling elites were ready to admit the scale of the problems. On the contrary, they envisioned that an upward turn in the Russian economy was just around the corner. As expressed by deputy prime minister Anatoly Chubais: “It seems to me that nothing can stop Russia from a long, steep, powerful upward trajectory of growth, constantly gaining in strength”.⁸³

The official view of the Ministry of Transport was no less enthusiastic than that of the government representatives cited above. Looking back in time, Minister Tsakh characterized 1997 as having been “difficult and intensive, but in many ways also good and productive”. After many years of stagnated and negative trends in the volume of passenger and cargo transport, the tendency was clearly towards positive growth. This also applied to the level of investments in the transport sector. According to Tsakh, the total amount of foreign credits was almost one and half times more than it had been during the previous year. Future prospects also seemed good. For example, the EBRD had expressed its readiness to open a credit line to investments in the development of international transport corridors in Russia.⁸⁴

Chubais’s “bluff”, as Medvedev calls it, came just a few months before Yeltsin fired Chubais and the rest of the ‘dream team’ together with the Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin on March 1998. While 1997 was the first year in which Russia actually recorded economic growth, the abrupt dismissal of Chernomyrdin’s government and the inability to form a new one quickly enough

⁸¹ Cited in Medvedev 2000, 281.

⁸² Yeltsin 1997.

⁸³ Cited in Medvedev 2000, 282.

⁸⁴ This was reported in an article published in connection with the transport conference organized in St. Petersburg right after the third Pan-European transport conference in Helsinki. *Oktyabrskaya Magistral’* 23.6.1997; *Transport Rossii* 1998:2.

undermined the fragile economic and political stability.⁸⁵ The economic crisis in August 1998 brought to the fore “how deformed and fragile the emerging political order and economy had proved to be when tested”. But it also showed that there was no way back: “the crisis revealed how dramatically Russia had changed over the course of the decade”.⁸⁶ The economic crisis set the stage for the stabilization of the macro-economic environment. This was mainly due to economic reforms already implemented, coupled with the devaluation of the rouble and favourable external circumstances, the high export prices of which particularly “fed into profitability, investment, tax revenue and higher incomes”.⁸⁷

Soon afterwards the economy followed a path of rapid economic growth leaving behind long years of recession. Consequently, freight volumes and passenger flows inside as well as to and from Russia increased considerably. The problem of ‘*uskorenije*’ – accelerating the pace of travel in Russia and the quality of management of the transport flows in general became an even more pressing task. Improving the quality of transport – the harmonization of transport operation practices and legislation concerning international norms and regulations⁸⁸ would support the competitiveness of Russian industries in the global markets. But since it was the oil sector and booming oil exports that emerged as the engine of growth after the 1998 economic crisis, a substantial part of the discussion focused on how to ensure the uninterrupted delivery of oil and gas to the foreign markets.⁸⁹ In this context, the discussion on the Russian transport corridors re-emerged, focusing on the role of state agencies in overseeing these two tasks.

16.3 The ‘state-forming’ function of infrastructure development

The starting point for these discussions was the Scientific-practical Conference: the Transport of Russia at the Turn of the Century. Organized only 20 days beforehand, the December 6, 1999 conference brought to the Kremlin palace a “serious collective” as Prime Minister Vladimir Putin termed the gathering. The

⁸⁵ Sutela 2004, 140.

⁸⁶ Gustafson 1999, 6.

⁸⁷ Sutela 2004, 118, 139–142; see also Lewin 2000, 288–294.

⁸⁸ The federal target programme ‘the Modernization of the Transport System’ and its sub-programme on international transport corridors contained a separate section on “normative-legislative support” where changes to be made in Russian legislation in accordance with international norms and regulations were listed. Government of the RF 2001b, 89–97.

⁸⁹ Frank 1999a.

conference was in fact the first major event organized in the 1990s that focused entirely on transport problems. Later it was given the status of a ‘foundational moment’ in the creation of the “ideological basis” for a policy on transport infrastructure modernization. It acquired a definite form six years later in the Transport Strategy of the Russian Federation.⁹⁰

Speaking in front of nearly six thousand *transportnikov* – transport workers, the still relatively unknown Prime Minister seized the opportunity and formulated the main tasks of the government in the sphere of transport. The point of departure was the realization that the infrastructure base of the transport system was obsolete. During the past decade, nothing, or almost nothing had changed when it came to the speed of passenger and cargo transportation and its organization, Putin argued. Second, precedence had to be given to the development of the national machine-building industry that would also function as a catalyst for the development of a real sector of the national economy. And thirdly, the development of the transport sphere had to be closely linked with developments taking place in the world economy and in the economy of Russia.⁹¹

What was required was an improvement in the quality of the transport system. However, the throughput and capacity of the system were no longer sufficient quality indicators. “The transport system also has to be economically feasible, comfortable, and safe for people and the environment”, Putin emphasized. “International experience shows”, continued Putin, “that the solution of these tasks requires completely new approaches (to transportation): the application of new information-administrative systems, the principles of logistics, and the integration of transportation with industrial technologies”.⁹²

Therefore the Government also supports the technological modernization of transport, and reforming the administrative system in such a way that it is directed at the future and synchronized with the development of the Russian and world economy. It goes without saying that transport should stay one step ahead of the other sectors of the economy in the future. This is the only way to provide Russia with a competitive advantage in the world markets and to allow us to execute the major economic and, dare I say, state

⁹⁰ Rossiiskaya Gazeta 27.5.2003; Frank 2000a; Frank 2000d; Transport Rossii 6.–12.12.1999; Transport Rossii 27.–31.12.1999. This conforms to the general perception of change in the spectrum of Russian political life during autumn 1999 and especially after President Yeltsin’s resignation on New Year’s Eve 1999. Shevtsova 2005, 41–43; Sakwa 2004.

⁹¹ Putin 1999; Frank 1999b.

⁹² Putin 1999.

and state-forming (*obshchegosudarstvenno-obrazuyushchuyu*) function of transport.⁹³

The rearrangement (*obustroistvo*) of the existing infrastructures would be a required catalyst to achieve stronger economic growth and improve Russia's competitiveness in the international markets. In addition, the infrastructure development was regarded as a mechanism for the preservation of the integrity of Russia's economic-political space.

A uniform (*edinoe*) economic space, the integrity of our statehood (*gosudarstvennosti*), and the defence and safety of the country rests on and functions to a large extent because of the stability and reliability of your work, especially in such remote regions as trans-Baikalia, and the Far East where people also live, and have taken stock of the problems the country has faced in recent years. Your work is important not only for the state as a whole, but also for each individual. People wish to be assured that they will not be cut off from the historical centre of Russia, will be protected against possible threats, and integrated into the uniform economic and cultural life of the country.⁹⁴

Later, in his annual address to the Federal Assembly in 2004, President Putin returned to the same issue and defined the transport sector modernization as one of the key tasks to be tackled in the near future.⁹⁵

Today, the poor condition and low density of the road network, oil pipelines, gas-transport system and the infrastructure of the power industry places serious restrictions on the development of the Russian economy (...) At the same time, a modern, well-developed transport infrastructure will be capable of turning Russia's geographical features into a real competitive advantage for the country. What needs to be done to achieve this? Above all, we need to unite the economic centres of the country, to provide economic subjects with unhindered access to regional and international markets, and at the same time provide infrastructure services of a world standard.⁹⁶

To emphasize that the modernization of the country's transport infrastructure was not on the agenda merely with the aim of reaching a target figure – the doubling of GDP within a ten-year period – Putin added:

⁹³ Putin 1999.

⁹⁴ Putin 1999.

⁹⁵ Putin 2004. Cf. Putin 2002; Putin 2003a; Putin 2005; Putin 2006; Putin 2007.

⁹⁶ Putin 2004.

I would say that the development of infrastructure is more than an economic task. Solving it will not just directly affect the state of affairs in the economy, but ensure the unity of the country as a whole – whether people feel they are citizens of a united, large nation, and whether they can make use of its advantages.⁹⁷

These few lines encapsulate what the main government programmes on transport infrastructure modernization – the Modernization of the Transport System 2002–2010 and the Transport Strategy of the Russian Federation – seek to accomplish. The long-term strategy of the Government of the Russian Federation, as outlined in these two federal level programmes, is aimed at enhancing the coherence of the country and the competitiveness of Russia in the transit of goods and people between Europe and Asia. Furthermore, the Russian government considers transport to be the most important component of a productive infrastructure, and its continued development to be a priority of the state.⁹⁸

The possibility of ‘private investment’ in the transport branch has not been ruled out provided that those investments fulfil the objectives of the definite plans elaborated on by the government. The particular reference points of Putin’s speech in 2004 were the Strategy for the Development of Transport, and the subsequent Transport Strategy of the Russian Federation, which were being elaborated on previous year by a special commission.⁹⁹ The ‘international transport corridor’ concept provided a solution to tie together the requirements of *competition* in the sphere of international transit transport, the *control* of the execution of the development plans and the *coherence* of Russia’s economic space. However, as noted earlier by Minister Frank:

Geography and transport economics are two different disciplines. Forwarders and carriers not only count kilometres changing on the map but compare the anticipated speed of delivery and costs between alternative routes. They also take into account the reliability and stability of this or that transport corridor... Given what was said, Russia’s contribution to the creation of the Euro-Asian transport system of the 21st century depends on how it manages to use the opportunities which it has been granted by nature and the previous generations. Are we able to build on Russian territory an economical, technically advanced and environmentally sustainable (*ekologicheskii chistuyu*) transport network that is effectively integrated into the global transport system?¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Putin 2004. Emphasis added; cf. Putin 2003b.

⁹⁸ Eijbergen, B. et al. 2004, 1; Government of Russia 2001; Government of Russia 2004.

⁹⁹ Mintrans 2004c; Mintrans 2003f; Mintrans2003b; Pynnöniemi 2006b.

¹⁰⁰ Frank 2000e.

The last citation brings to the fore two parallel lines of argumentation. On the one hand, the improvement of the country's transport and infrastructure system is about speed of movement. Success in creating international transport corridors in the territory of Russia is regarded as one of the benchmarks of Russia's competitiveness in the international markets. In this context, what counts is the time that it takes for transit traffic to go through Russia. This is also an important issue when the preservation of the integrity of the country is considered. However, discussion in the latter framework focuses more on the spatial-political dimension, on the rearrangement (*obustroistvo*) of the agencies and infrastructures providing for coherence of the country.

The inconsistency emerging between these two lines of argumentation can be described in terms of pairs: control versus regulation of the state-business relations, competition versus cooperation in the international sphere and reconstruction versus diversification of the economy. The pairs are the result of a reconstruction of the argumentation for a policy. The definition of the major tasks of transport network development in terms of *competition*, *control* and *coherence* does not yet single out Russia as an exception among other countries. Rather, the particularity of Russia in this regard has to do with the way in which these objectives are put into practice, and in their order of importance, which also changes over time.

The following figure (Figure 2) illustrates how the pairs of reasoning are located in terms of the 'background' and the 'foreground' of Russia's policy on transport corridors.

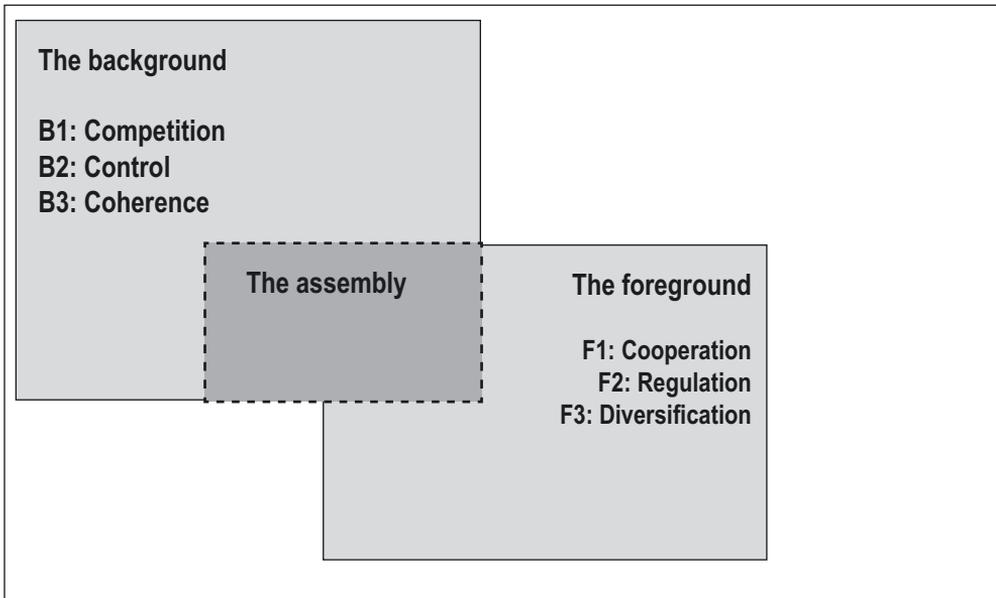


Figure 2. The semantic games in the 'background' and the 'foreground'.

In the remaining chapters of this study I will spell out the interrelations and possible inconsistencies between these different patterns of argumentation ('semantic games' that point to a discourse). I will explicate the agentive context ('the assembly') emerging as a result of the nesting of the different sets of games. My purpose here is not to reconstruct a tight typology into which the different kinds of 'games' played in Russian politics could be fitted. Rather, in my application of Roger Caillois' definition¹⁰¹ of games (competition, chance, simulation and vertigo), I will try to distinguish the range of possible actions, given the rules of playing a certain type of game.

¹⁰¹ Caillois 1961.

V

The Nesting: Making Use of the Corridors



Ohtnyi Ryad, Moscow, Russia, September 2006. Photograph by the author.

17 The ‘transport diplomacy’: competition/cooperation

17.1 Opening a new sphere of competition

17.1.1 *Russia: the ‘dead-end’ of Eurasia?*

The question to which the formulation of the ‘international transport corridor’ concept was presented as an answer was: Will Russia eventually become a country at a “dead end” in the transport sense, or, as is “almost predestined”, a developed transit country?¹ The use of the metaphor “dead end” captures the sensitivity of the issue. Instead of running along the Trans-Siberian railway, Asian-manufactured products are transported via the Suez Canal to European ports. Even products destined for Russia are first carried to the ports of Finland and only then by truck or railway transport to St. Petersburg and Moscow. An article published in the newspaper of the Ministry of Transport, *Transport Rossii*, on the eve of the international Euro-Asian transport conference in St. Petersburg in 2000, referred to this practice by noting that “everyone who can, carries cargo past Russia”.²

The definition of a set of connections as ‘international transport corridors’ provides a convenient way out of the ‘dead end’: a condition resulting from the disintegration of the former Soviet-era transport network and its administrative system. On the other hand, it offers a plausible way to argue for a vision of the future where Russian operators carry foreign trade cargo and the cargo destined for third countries instead of being forced just to acknowledge how much international operators (and other countries) benefit from Russian foreign trade flows. This posed a new challenge. Either Russia succeeds in developing transportation services that fulfil the criteria required for international transport or has to face losing the lucrative business.

The goal set in the policy on ‘international transport corridors’ is to reroute from 10 to 15 per cent of the total volume of the transit between Asia and Europe through Russia.³ This would mean returning to the level of transit flows

¹ Frank 2000b.

² The article cited Soviet-era figures saying that the yearly sum of money from the transit services acquired was 25 billion dollars. Today, transit services amount to approximately 15 times less. *Transport Rossii* 17.–23.7.2000.

³ Izmailov 2002; Mintrans 2001b.

experienced in the late Soviet period. International transit on the Trans-Siberian railway started in the early 1970s when the set of special trains was organized to run from the Far East to the eastern European (COMECON) countries, Scandinavia, and Iran. By 1979, the route had succeeded in capturing about 10 per cent of the total traffic and a quarter of that between Japan and North-Western Europe.⁴ It is this experience which is referred to in the current visions of increasing the bulk of transit along the Trans-Siberian Railway. The international transit operation was entrusted to a union-level agency, Sojuztransit, and it controlled the hard currency flows until 1989 when the Russian Ministry of Railways acquired the right to start its own business.⁵ Until then there were no freight forwarders and transportation was organized within the planning structures.

The situation changed drastically in the early 1990s when it became possible for virtually anybody to become a freight forwarder. The Ministry of Railways established a company called *Transreil* which specialized in international transit traffic. In June 1998 the ministry organized the competitive selection of forwarders and chose five companies which were to deal with the Trans-Siberian container traffic. The Ministry was subsequently accused of granting substantial discounts to its own international forwarder.⁶ Some years earlier, in November 1993, the Ministry of Transport had invited domestic as well as certain international transport operators and representatives of neighbouring countries to discuss the organization of the Trans-Siberian transit traffic. The meeting led to the establishment of an 'nternational Coordination Council of Trans-Siberian Transportation with participants from the government as well as from business.⁷

At the same time as the consolidation of the administration of the transit through the Trans-Siberian route was taking place, the volumes of transit traffic decreased substantially. From the late 1980s the volume of containers shipped westwards along the Trans-Siberian route had steadily decreased from 125,000 to 50,000 containers in 1998.⁸ The drop was a result of several factors including

⁴ Rodgers 1990, 212.

⁵ The Sojuztransit was privatized in 1994. During the loans for shares scam it became part of the Interros group. Westwood 2002, 100–103; Ukaz Prezidenta RF N2023 28.10.1994; Kommersant 16.11.1995. See also Freeland 2005 on loans for shares and the privatization process in general.

⁶ Westwood 2002, 99–100; cf. Galaburda 1996.

⁷ Westwood 2002, 100–103; Biznes MN 15.12.1993.

⁸ Since 1998, container shipments along the Trans-Siberian route have grown steadily from 15,100 TEU in 1998 to 48,300 TEU in 2002. In early 2003, the trans-shipments grew rapidly,

delays at the ports and at customs which hampered the punctual delivery of shipments, the simultaneous decrease in tariffs on the sea route between Asia and Europe, as well as theft and other disruptions such as ‘the war on the rails’ in May 1998, which dented the confidence of forwarders in the Siberian route.

By 1999, the situation on the Trans-Siberian railway had improved insofar as the distance between the Far Eastern ports of Russia and the European transport hubs could be counted in hours rather than days: “A container sent from a Japanese port to Germany”, writes Westwood, “would most likely make the trip in 477 hours, of which 292 hours would be taken by the rail transit over Russian and Belarusian railways to Brest (10 390 kilometres, of which 623 km were over Belarusian tracks)”.⁹ The share of international freight traffic along the Russian railways has increased by 70 per cent, accounting for as much as 30 per cent of the total freight traffic in 2004.¹⁰ However, the share of the Trans-Siberian route is roughly 1 per cent (approximately 6 million TEU) of the total trade flows transported between Asia and Europe.¹¹ The representation of Russia as a vigorous *land bridge*¹² between Europe and Asia was used in arguing for the redirecting of the transit traffic to the trans-Siberian route.

17.1.2 A Eurasian bridge

In the Modernization of the Transport System of Russia Federal Target Programme one answer given in reply to the question of whether Russia was at the ‘dead-end’ or provided a ‘bridge’ between Europe and Asia was expressed as follows:

Since Russia comprises thirty per cent of the territory of the Eurasian continent and has a well-developed transport system, it objectively is a natural bridge providing a set of transit connections in this direction.¹³

The point being made was that the geographical location of Russia is a positive attribute. This is because “transit routes through the territory of Russia are shorter

partly as a result of the tense situation in Irak, which affected the functioning of the Suez Canal. Izvestiya 16.10.2003.

⁹ Westwood 2002, 131.

¹⁰ Rossiiskaya Gazeta 11.6.2004.

¹¹ Ivanova, Toikka and Hilmola 2006, 77.

¹² Minister Frank used the word “lend-bridzh” in his speech at the second international transport conference in St. Petersburg on 12.9.2000. Frank 2000d; cf. Finansovye Izvestiya 18.7.2002.

¹³ Mintrans 2001b, 13; Centre for Strategic Research 2000.

(than the alternative ones such as TRACECA)", Russian territory is a "coherent legal space" and there is "a minimal number of border-crossings" in comparison to the competing routes. Thus, it is argued that transit through Russia is the shortest *and* the fastest route between Europe and Asia. The first premise of the argument is based on a simple observation. The sea route between Europe and Asia through the Suez Canal is approximately 21,000 kilometres whereas the length of the route through Russia (the Trans-Siberian Railway) is approximately 11–12,000 kilometres.¹⁴

The vision of Russia as a bridge is conditioned in the second presumption, often expressed in the same sentence. To become such a transit bridge requires actions upon which the country's "favourable geographical position" is *actualized*.¹⁵ In the above-mentioned text the notion "Russia is a natural bridge between Europe and Asia" is not a statement reporting this state of affairs as a matter of fact. In this connection the word bridge is used metaphorically to *represent*, to *stand for* – in general – to *mean* something beyond the brute physical features of the thing represented. The word "bridge" is a symbolic status-function. To make it 'real', in a way, requires that the word "bridge" is not used as a figure of speech as such, but is instead institutionalized for example in the form of the "East-West Transport Corridor" (see chapter 2.1).

But what does it take for something to function as a bridge? The basic condition is that the thing creates a stable connection between two points separated by something that would otherwise be impossible to cross over. In the Searlean sense the use of something as a bridge is a question of the intrinsic features of the thing. The structure of an object makes it *usable* to function as a bridge. It is important to note that in order to recognize an object as functioning as a bridge, we do not need words or other status markers. Searle presupposes that the thing already exists and it has its (language-independent) intrinsic features that precede the collective imposition of a new meaning. It is only in the latter move that the thing becomes part of the institutional realm.¹⁶

I have already presented the formal criteria (see chapter 13.3) of the institutionalization of the status 'international transport corridor'. In the previous

¹⁴ Transport Rossii 3.–9.5.1999; Mintrans 2001b, 13.

¹⁵ Putin 1999.

¹⁶ Here Searle departs from Bruno Latour, for example, who argues that things are constituted in an interaction between the user and the thing. For example, a bridge does not have intrinsic features that make it a bridge. In other words, the bridge, whether it is made of wooden logs haphazardly tied together or of elements requiring technically advanced engineering work, is a bridge if it is *used* as a bridge. See Latour 1999; Latour 2000.

chapter I also noted that the rearrangement of the existing infrastructure and transport system in the sense of an ‘international transport corridor’ would imply the emergence of “civilized transport markets” (especially criteria f3–f6, see chapter 13.3). However, in the preceding chapters I have also hinted at an interpretation of ‘international transport corridors’ as sites of aggressive competition. The thing worth fighting over comprises the revenues generated by the transit flow to the state or individual enterprises and, in a more vague sense, the influence over other states in the game of international relations. In this framework, the adoption of logistical principles (criteria f6) is more than a set of technological solutions to the problem of carrying cargo from one place to another. It is a “secret weapon” in the fight for economic-political leverage in Eurasia.¹⁷ In the following two chapters I will reconstruct how the reasoning on ‘competition’ in the sphere of international (transit) transport evolved.

17.1.3 *How to best fight for the transit flows?*

Improving Russia’s competitiveness in comparison with the alternative routes required the implementation of “market principles” in every sphere of transportation, argued Minister Tsakh at the joint meeting of the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of Railways held in February 1998.¹⁸ The process of changing the transport legislation in accordance with the requirements of a market economy and the opening up of Russia to international markets effectively started in the mid-1990s and this process continues today. The current transport legislation is a mixture of Soviet laws and the new codes (*kodeks*), regulations (*ustav*), as well as decisions (*postanovlenie*) issued by the federal government or different ministries.¹⁹

One of the problems from the Russian point of view, as argued by deputy Prime Minister Vladimir Bulgak in 1997, was that the domestic freight operators were not ready to face the growing foreign competition. Speaking on the same occasion as Minister Tsakh, Bulgak characterized the role of the transport ministry as an “initiator of decisions” on the new form of administration in the transport sphere. “What kind of transport service market do we have today?” was his rhetorical

¹⁷ Transport Rossii 1998:7.

¹⁸ Rossiiskaya Gazeta 11.2.1998.

¹⁹ The new legislation includes the Aviation Code 1997, the Transport Regulation of Russian Railways 1998 and the Code of Commercial Shipping 1999. Sivakov, O.V., A.B. Novosel'tsev, B.G. Ermolaev and Ju. B. Makovskii 2001, 6–10.

question, which he replied to by saying: “We do not know”. While the responsible federal agencies worked “with their tail between their legs” (*B'em po hvostam*), domestic transport markets as well as the former post-Soviet transport system were lost to foreign competitors. This was unacceptable and required “operational decisions” in support of the national freight operators and forwarders. According to Bulgak, these decisions ought to be directed at *the elaboration of a market-based system of administering the economy*. But the market, he added, was only an addition to the head, not something that should replace it.²⁰

The idea of markets as an *addition* to what was considered *a rational state policy* aptly captures the general lines of reasoning. In this framework, it was logical to argue that national transport operators should be protected from foreign competition by “legal means”. What is more, as was unanimously agreed at the joint Collegium meeting of the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of Railways, the development of a united transport system would be impossible if the problems that the national forwarders faced were not solved by providing them with “legislative defence” (*pravovoi zashchiti*). In this connection in particular, the need to formulate a law on “strategic cargo and cargoes with a double meaning” was expressed. Only by these means would the state be able “to reserve a considerable part of export volumes for the national forwarders”.²¹

In fact, this was a plausible remedy to argue for because in accordance with the law On the Government of the Russian Federation issued in 1997, the government agencies are obligated to protect the interests of the domestic producers of goods and services.²² An ‘inter-departmental commission’ was established with the express purpose of overseeing the implementation of this policy objective, although according to Bulgak, it had not succeeded in its mission to improve the competitiveness of Russian companies. “We have a commission for competitiveness, but a lack of competitiveness”, he noted and called for further activation of the work of the commission.²³

Even though working methods and commissions have changed over the years, the basic position has remained largely the same. Speaking at the Center for Strategic Development in Moscow in March 2000, Minister Frank stated that the “sacred responsibility of the state” is to protect and to put in order (*obustroistvo*)

²⁰ Bulgak 1998; Transport Rossii 1998:7.

²¹ Transport Rossii 1998:7.

²² Salischeva 2000, 95.

²³ Transport Rossii 1998:7; Bulgak 1998.

the transit corridors, and also to “define the conditions of their use for ‘our’ transport operators and for the ‘others’”.²⁴

Clearly, the benefits that we mentioned make the transit market an arena of active rivalry. And the main characters here are not only, and not so much, the transport companies, but the governments and inter-state alliances.²⁵

In the *fight for transit flows*, the main instruments comprise the national legislation, tax subsidies and direct state funding as well as international agreements. Using the example of the Traceca project, Minister Frank argued that everywhere else, unlike in Russia, the fight for transit was regarded as a subject of active state involvement.

“Last, but not least,” the minister argued, “transit is the correct means, as we used to say, “to strengthen friendship and good neighbourhood relations” and, to use more contemporary wording, to increase the international standing of the transit country. When a country permanently directs its cargo transport through our territory or is our partner in exploiting a transit corridor, the political leadership of the country will hardly wish to complicate relations with us on trivialities.”²⁶ The implementation of these objectives fell in particular within the sphere of tariff policy.

It is time for the state to declare: “We can and should become a strong transit country in the near future!” The task of increasing the transit freight flows should be included in the list of the state’s strategic priorities. If this is done, the logical next step will be to develop the official propaganda of the Russian transit projects and the counter-propaganda concerning the projects of our competitors.²⁷

The practical inference, as suggested in the above citation, was to elaborate on the official propaganda in support of Russian transit corridors and anti-propaganda against competing corridor proposals. Frank noted that “systemic support” from the MID (Ministry of Foreign Affairs), special services (FSB and others), state

²⁴ The practice of granting special customs privileges by presidential edict for certain commodities or particular agencies is yet another example of similar reasoning. In the early 1990s customs benefits had become a much favoured form of income since it was virtually impossible to control their actual amount or utilization. In 1994 alone, such benefits totalled 6 trillion roubles. Expert Institute of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs 1995, 114; Frank 2000b.

²⁵ Frank 2000b; Frank 2000d.

²⁶ Frank 2000b; for the same argumentation, see also Frank 2000d; Frank 1998.

²⁷ Frank 2000b.

media and the education system (elementary schools and schools for transport specialists) was required. For example, maps of international transport corridors should be incorporated into the atlases used in elementary schools. In more concrete terms, Minister Frank argued that:

For the development of transit, it is probably unnecessary to draft a special law or laws. But when preparing legislation for the transport sphere, and also legislative acts that indirectly regulate transport activity, we should also consider whether they will stimulate the development of transit, or on the contrary, hamper it. It is a question, first of all, of such bills as the law on seaports, the customs code, the law on transport-forwarding activity and so on.²⁸

The envisioned “systemic support” for Russian transport corridors materialized in what was termed “Transport Diplomacy”, which was introduced to the public in January 2006. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia and the OAO Russian Railways subsequently signed a cooperation agreement which, according to press releases from the Ministry, “reflects the growing role of transport diplomacy in our foreign policy activities”. The Ministry offered its “information and legal expertise” for the purpose of “joint elaboration of large-scale and long-term projects” which the Russian Railways had undertaken. In response to claims that this would be a sign of Russia using its economic leverage in a negative way, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov stated that:

The opportune use of a state’s economic advantages in foreign policy is neither extraordinary nor unusual. On the contrary, a normal state in its right mind has to use its advantages, whether economic or otherwise, in order to pursue its foreign policy in the interests of its security, its economic development and the improvement of its people’s standard of living.²⁹

It can be said that the concept of Transport Diplomacy brought together previous lines of reasoning from 1997 onwards on the ‘foreign transport policy’ of Russia. The three international Euro-Asian transport conferences organized in St. Petersburg in 1998, 2000 and 2003 served as venues for the communication of Russian interests to international audiences with regard to the development of *Russian international transport corridors*.³⁰ It goes without saying that the language used in this context was considerably different from that used in the

²⁸ Frank 2000b.

²⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of RF 2006; Edinaya Lenta Novostei 20.1.2006.

³⁰ Declaration 1998; Declaration 2000b; Declaration 2003.

domestic discussion on transport corridors. Instead of envisioning Russia as a 'bridge' and the development of 'international transport corridors' as a fight over control of that bridge, a new interpretation was offered, namely a vision of the development of Russian international transport corridors as 'interfaces' between Europe and Asia.

17.2 An invitation to cooperate

17.2.1 *Creating an optimal interface between partners*

The second international Euro-Asian transport conference in September 2000 took place just five days after the government meeting where the 'international transport corridor' concept was officially included in the federal transport policy glossary.³¹ Speaking for an international audience, Minister Frank emphasized that Russia was not entering the transit transport markets as an "aggressive competitor" but as a "partner that offers transit services for the needs of the new century". Russia was also willing to cooperate "as an equal" with those countries that saw it first and foremost as a competitor in "a fight (*bor'be*) for transport flows". "This approach", concluded Frank, "can be considered constructive from the viewpoint of priorities of integration and stabilization"³². Later in the same speech Minister Frank referred again to unspecified "foreign partners" who, during recent years, had come to the conclusion that:

Russia as a country is a dead end, its communications are routes intended for the export of minerals and the import of finished products to the Russian market. Today, along with oil and metals, Russia offers the world community a new national product, namely the export of transit services. We are ready to produce and sell this product on mutually beneficial terms with our foreign partners.³³

Couched in language befitting an international seminar, the idea of "transit service" repeats the general point made earlier by Minister Frank at the government session. The "Geographical location of Russia", said Frank, "and the level of development of its transport infrastructure" offers a solution to the problem of

³¹ Government of the RF 2000b.

³² Frank 2000e.

³³ Frank 2000e; Frank 2001.

how to create an optimal *interface* (*interfeisom*) between Europe and Asia.³⁴ The use of the loan word *interface* widens the scope of the solution. The development of international transit corridors in the territory of Russia is approached not only in the abstract terms of “geopolitical rivalry” but is also seen in the context of “circulation of power through space”. The latter pattern of argumentation results in different kinds of actions from those envisioned in the context of “geopolitical rivalry”.

The task, as suggested by Minister Frank at the St. Petersburg conference, is to create “software” that is adjusted to manage transit flows effectively. In this way, Russia will become more than just a point of conjunction between Europe and Asia. The elaboration and active development of the international *transit* corridors in the territory of Russia is expected to bolster the federal (and regional) budget, steer foreign and domestic investments towards the modernization of the required infrastructure and, all in all, act as a catalyst for regional economic development. Achieving these aims would require the formation of a coherent transport space, in terms of the transport and administrative-legislative ‘infrastructure’.³⁵

17.2.2 The fusion of pan-European and international corridors

In the text prepared for the government meeting in September 2000, the reasoning for the formulation of a federal policy on transport corridors started with an acknowledgement that the “system of pan-European transport corridors does not fully address the geopolitical and economic interests of Russia”.³⁶ This, as the text went on to explain, is because in their current form the pan-European transport corridors do not:

Guarantee passage towards the set of regions which are the major participants in Russia’s foreign economic relations, as well as towards one of the world’s economic hubs – the Asia-Pacific region. Also, they do not permit the active use of Russian transport connections in ensuring international trans-continental connections.³⁷

Therefore:

³⁴ Frank 2000e.

³⁵ Centre for Strategic Research 2000; Frank 2000e.

³⁶ Government of the RF 2000a; cf. Oktyabr’skaya Magistral 14.9.2000.

³⁷ Government of the RF 2000a.

In order to take full advantage of the geographical location of the country, to secure the continued growth of foreign trade activities, and to strengthen Russia's role in the world economic system, it is necessary to formulate and systematically develop Russian international transport corridors as a principal element in the recently created international Euro-Asian transport infrastructure.³⁸

In this way, the development of international transport corridors on the territory of Russia provides an answer to the question of "what to do", which emerges when the objective is to secure the country's foreign trade shipments and strengthen Russia's role in the world economy and international politics. The 'international transport corridors' line of reasoning was regarded as "a systemic approach" to the transport infrastructure development. As noted by Minister Frank at the government meeting in September 2000:

The necessity for a coherent plan for the development of the transport infrastructure is obvious. Common sense compels us to make it, especially in light of the international corridors, which practically coincide with the main internal highways. Today we are ready to elaborate on such a plan.³⁹

The 'International Transport Corridors' sub-programme of the Federal Target 'Modernization of the Russian Transport System' programme included a 50-page-long list of investment projects organized in accordance with the 'transport corridors' and categorized into the following sections: infrastructure network, freight transport, passenger transport, security of transport operations, navigation and information technology, the normative-legislative basis, and international relations (such as the organization of international conferences). The document also included a detailed description of the location of the corridors including, for example, those border-crossing points which were counted as part of the 'corridors'.⁴⁰

The reorganization of the centre-region relations in spring 2000 and the creation of seven federal districts provided a new spatial-political framework for the identification of investments projects.⁴¹ The relationship between the

³⁸ Government of the RF 2000a. The issue of how to secure foreign trade shipments and the development of Russian ports was discussed at the joint meeting of the Collegium of Mintrans and the MPS on 29.11.2002. See e.g. Rukshi 2002; Yakunin 2002. See also the earlier Mintrans 2000.

³⁹ Frank 2000b.

⁴⁰ Mintrans 2001b.

⁴¹ Frank 2000b; Government of the RF 2000a.

competences of the federal districts and the agencies at the federal executive level was subsequently clarified in the cooperation agreements, for example the one signed between the Ministry of Transport and the North-West Federal District in April 2003. The two agencies agreed upon “the necessity to coordinate the actions of the federal agencies in the North-West Federal District with those of regional and local administrations, inter-regional economic associations, and other organizations and unions”. It expressed the need to define the term “mechanism” when it came to realizing the state transport policy, as well as “coordination and cooperation” when it came to completing the prioritized transport infrastructure modernization projects.⁴²

The prioritized projects in the North-West Federal District included the following:

- The modernization and reconstruction of the track between Buslovskaya (on the Finnish border) and St. Petersburg, Bui-Kotel'nich, the development of the border-crossing stations and railway stations near the ports in St. Petersburg, Vyborg, Vysotsk, Kaliningrad, Chernyahovske, Mamonovo, and Chernyshevskaya station;
- The modernization of a road from the border with Finland to St. Petersburg and Moscow including the building of a by-pass around the city of St. Petersburg, a road between Dorozhnoe and the border with Poland, a road connection to the new and already existing ports in the Leningrad region, and the development of service stations along the roads;
- The reconstruction and development of the ports in the St. Petersburg and Kaliningrad region, the building of new ports at Ust-Luga and Primorsk, and the construction of a regional maritime safety system (RCBM) in the Gulf of Finland;
- The building of a container terminal at the river port of the city of St. Petersburg (inland waterway programme).⁴³

All the projects in the sub-programme were identified as a part of the international transport corridor ‘North-South’. The relationship between ‘pan-European’ and ‘international’ corridors was redefined accordingly:

With the creation of the system of (international transport corridors) MTK on the territory of Russia, the pan-European transport corridor II became a part (*vkljuchen v sostav*) of the ‘Transsib’ corridor, (and) the section of

⁴² Memorandum 2003.

⁴³ Mintrans 2001b, 29.

the Pan-European corridor IX between the Finnish border – St. Petersburg – Moscow became part of the ‘North-South’ corridor.⁴⁴

The system of international transport corridors included the following directions: the ‘North-South’ and ‘East-West’ ‘international transport corridors’, the Northern Sea Route, the pan-European transport corridors I, II and IX, and the corridors that connect the sea ports in the Primorsk region in the Russian Far East to the ports in the Asia-Pacific region (especially to the ports of China). However, in the context of the Corridor IX Steering Committee meeting in Helsinki in 2001, the relationship between Corridor IX and the North-South corridor was presented in completely the opposite way.

Russia has proposed the extension of Corridor IX to Astrakhan (on the Caspian Sea) and Novorossiisk (on the Black Sea). The ‘Caspian Road’ (M6) will be rebuilt as a four-lane facility at Tambovin and Volgograd and generally upgraded over a 515-km section. The M4 road to the Black Sea (the ‘Don Road’) has been developed quite fast in recent years. In 2000, a 103-km motorway section was opened to traffic near Moscow. By 2010, the ‘Don Road’ will be constructed as a category I road (motorway) to a length of 441 km.⁴⁵

However, it is important to note that from the Russian viewpoint, Corridor IX was merged *into* Corridor (MTK) ‘North-South’, and not other way around. In the newly edited version of the sub-programme on international transport corridors called ‘export of transport services’ the reference to the pan-European corridors is dropped altogether. The new sub-programme speaks only about the inadequacy of the ‘existing system of international transport corridors on the territory of Russia’ without mentioning its ‘pan-European’ dimension.⁴⁶

The fusion of the corridors at the semantic level had consequences at the practical level of the project implementation. In the modernization programme, a sum of 198 billion roubles was earmarked for the development of the ‘North-South’ corridor between the years 2002–2010, and 243 billion roubles for the ‘East-West’ corridor (Trans-Siberian route) during the same period. Subsequently, 22 billion roubles were earmarked for those sections of ‘pan-European corridor IX’ that were not already included in the ‘North-South’ corridor, while routes belonging

⁴⁴ Mintrans 2001b, 21; Frank 2001.

⁴⁵ Memorandum 2001; TINA 2002, 95.

⁴⁶ Mintrans 2005c, 7.

to part of 'pan-European corridor I' were allocated 1–5 billion roubles.⁴⁷ The pan-European corridors IX and I appear only in one instance as funding categories. The “building of a road between Dorozhnoe and the Polish border” project is recognized as part of the Corridor I development, whereas the “modernization of the road between St. Petersburg, Pskov and the Belarusian border” and the “modernization of the Moscow – Kaluga – Bryansk – Ukrainian border road” are identified as part of the development of Corridor IX.⁴⁸

However, at the practical level, the two conceptualizations, the pan-European corridor and the international transport corridor (MTK) were compatible. Irrespective of what the 'corridor' was called, improving the rail and road connections to the border between Finland and Russia, as well as improving the infrastructure facilities at the seaports in the Russian part of the Gulf of Finland were prioritized. But when observed from the Russian angle, corridors that were envisioned in the framework of the EU policy (the map of Corridor IX, for example) had a different set of conjunction points.

17.2.3 The international Crete transport corridor 'North–South': from an idea to an office

The traditional notion of Russia as a bridge between Asian manufacturers in the east, and European consumers in the west, is accompanied by the depiction of Russia as a point of interconnection between north and south. As noted above (chapter 12.2), the idea of the 'South-Centre-North' corridor originated in the late Soviet period in the framework of improving the transport infrastructure between the two major cities, St. Petersburg and Moscow, and connections from the centre towards the Black Sea and Caspian Sea regions.

During the Soviet years, the freight transportation in the north-south direction was generally referred to as “Iranian transit”. For the most part, this was also the situation in the late 1990s when the bulk of the traffic consisted of Russia's trade with Iran and some Trans-Caucasian countries, and only 2.5 million tons of the total volume was actually transit traffic. Discussions about the facilitation of freight transport in this direction intensified in the mid-1990s. The Ministry

⁴⁷ Mintrans 2001b, 8.

⁴⁸ Mintrans 2001b, 38.

of Transport of Russia estimated that the volume of transit in the corridor was set to increase up to 15–16 million tons annually.⁴⁹

In 1995 the Russian and Turkmenistan governments signed a bilateral cooperation agreement on the development of the ‘North-South’ corridor. The agreement called for the establishment of a joint company in charge of the reconstruction of the railway route from Astrahan to the border between Turkmenistan and Iran (Serakhs) and further development of the new ‘international transport corridor’.⁵⁰ Two years later, the Russian and Iranian ministries of transport signed a similar agreement on joint cooperation in “reconstructing (*obustroistvo*) the North-South route (*marshrut*) (Helsinki – Moscow – Volgograd – Astrahan – Enzeli – Noushahr – Bender-Abbas)”. In the latter agreement the main emphasis was on the development of the ports of Olya and Enzeli on the Caspian Sea.⁵¹ From these two alignment variants of the ‘North–South’ corridor, the latter subsequently became the new “transcontinental passage” through Russia, whereas the idea of the railway route through Turkmenistan was soon marginalized in the Russian discussion.⁵² The third possibility was rarely addressed in the Russian discussion. This was the route used in the Soviet period between Russia and Iran through Azerbaijan.⁵³

During the second international transport conference in St. Petersburg in September 2000, the governments of Russia, Iran and Oman signed an international agreement on the establishment of the ‘International North-South Transport Corridor’.⁵⁴ The agreement was the first step in the institutionalization of the corridor in its current form. By definition a corridor is:

A combination of long-range transport communications (both existing and newly established), connecting the Parties and characterized by adequate

⁴⁹ RIA Novosti 5.2.2002; Kommersant 14.5.1996; Rossiiskaya Gazeta 3.8.1996; Mintrans 2003a; Seanews 22.4.2003; Seanews 6.5.2003. In this speech at the Security Council, Minister Frank cited figures according to which the value of Iranian transit in the 1970s and 1980s was 5 million dollars per annum. Frank 2000c.

⁵⁰ The new railway track that connected Turkmenistan and Iran via the Serakhs railway junction at the border was ceremonially opened in May 1996. For the transcaucasian countries, it provided a passage to Western Europe through Iran instead of Russia. Turkmenistan saw itself as a transit route between the Ural and Siberian regions and the Persian Gulf countries. Government of the RF 1995; Kommersant 14.5.1996; ITAR-TASS 23.9.1997.

⁵¹ Nezavisimaya Gazeta 24.3.1998.

⁵² Rossiiskaya Gazeta 19.2.1998; ITAR-TASS 25.4.2001.

⁵³ This possibility was mentioned as an alternative for the construction of a railway to the Russian port of Olya. Sherbanin 2003, 34.

⁵⁴ Agreement 2000; Transport Rossii 1.–7.5.2000; Finansovye Izvestiya 18.7.2002; Finansovye Izvestiya 6.2.2003. Russia ratified the agreement in 2002. Government of the RF 2002a.

provision of services, normally various modes of transport ensuring the transportation of passengers and goods within the international links, towards the direction of their highest concentration.⁵⁵

The international 'North-South' transport corridor consists of the connections "from India, from Oman by sea, to and from Iran and the Caspian region, to the Russian Federation and further".⁵⁶ The "appropriate facilities" included:

Checkpoints at the border-crossing; customs points; terminals; stations for train-car group exchange; stations for wheel repair and replacement; railway, car and combined ferry crossings/ports, both existing and newly built, coupled with the high prioritization of transportation along the International North-South Transport Corridor.⁵⁷

The purpose of the cooperation was to provide for "a *reduction* in traveling time for the transit of passengers and cargo across the territories of their countries", the *lowering* of the cost of transit transportation, as well as the *simplification* and *unification* of all the administrative documentation and procedures. It was estimated that the implementation of these measures would increase the speed of shipments twofold. What the Russian transport authorities sought to do was convince their western and eastern colleagues that the new "tea route", as the corridor was also called, was in effect the most efficient alternative for the routing of the trade flow from India, Pakistan and Iran to Europe or vice-versa.⁵⁸

During the first stage, a coordination council was established to oversee the cooperation between the parties to the agreement. The first meeting of the coordination council took place in Teheran in June 2001. A year later, the "North-South" corridor had morphed from an idea into "an office" under the auspices of the Ministry of Transport of the RF. In addition to the formation of an administrative body for the corridor, the introduction of a unitary through tariff was proposed as a means of attracting more traffic to the route, as it was suffering from inadequate transit flows and a lack of competitiveness vis-à-vis other traffic routes in the region.⁵⁹

In May 2003 the council decided to establish an international consortium for the development of the corridor. The consortium was to include major German,

⁵⁵ Agreement 2000, Article 1.

⁵⁶ Agreement 2000, Article 1.

⁵⁷ Agreement 2000, Article 1.

⁵⁸ Agreement 2000; RIA Novosti 12.3.2000; Rossiiskaya Gazeta 8.5.2001.

⁵⁹ Government of the RF 2000b; ITAR-TASS 29.7.2001.

Russian and Iranian transport companies. The main areas of cooperation identified in this context were logistics development and investments in infrastructure building. Interestingly, a year later in June 2004, the head of the Russian Railway Company, Gennadi Fadeev, proposed that the Railways and maritime agencies should jointly establish an international forwarding company that would organize transportation along the 'North-South' corridor.⁶⁰ From the Russian viewpoint, the problem in the development of the corridor was not just the competition between different countries involved in the north-south transit, but also the departmentalism that hampered the coordination of actions on the Russian side.⁶¹ This became particularly evident in the case of the reconstruction of the port of Olya in the Astrakhan oblast. The development of terminal facilities did not go hand-in-hand with the building of the missing railway connection (50 kilometres) to the main rail network. In the end, the railway was built in just 10 months and opened ceremonially in July 2004.⁶²

The practical implementation of the 'corridor' development can be exemplified via one of the prioritized projects in this context – the reconstruction of the "Don" M-4 federal highway. The total length of the route is 1167 kilometres and it stretches from Moscow via Voronezh, Rostov-na-Donu, Krasnodar, Novorossiysk, and Sochi to the southern border of Russia. The road was not originally designed as a *magistral* and was consequently of a lower standard. Currently, parts of the road have been upgraded to the level of a first category road – the equivalent of the status of an 'all-union road' during the Soviet era. The inscription "M-4" stands for an internationally agreed network of main international transport arteries, whereas "the Don" is the equivalent of the "Russia", "Scandinavia", and "Amur" federal routes. The importance of this route has to do with the fact that the 'M-4 "Don"' highway is not just 'an important transport artery connecting the central and southern parts of Russia, but also the only existing road to the southern ports of Russia'.⁶³ Freight flows which passed through the port of Odessa during the Soviet years were, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, redirected to Russian

⁶⁰ Vedomosti 15.6.2004; Finansovye Izvestiya 6.5.2003. The idea to organize cooperation in the framework of the corridor on the basis of a consortium was written into the agreements with Turkmenistan and India signed in 1995. Government of the RF 1995.

⁶¹ Transport Rossii 15.–21.5.2000; Transport Rossii 21.–27.10.2002; Transport Rossii 28.10.–3.11.2002.

⁶² Telekanal TV-Tsentr 28.7.2004; Transport Rossii 21.–27.10.2002; Transport Rossii 15.–21.5.2000.

⁶³ Rosavtodor 2006.

ports in the Black Sea (to the port of Novorossiisk especially).⁶⁴ Thus the Don highway has gained geopolitical significance.

The geopolitical value of the route is inherent in the fact that it, together with the (federal) "Russia" road, is a part of the international "North-South" Crete transport corridor IX that connects the northern ports of the country with the southern parts, forging a route from Northern Europe to the Mediterranean and to the Near East.⁶⁵

The new status of *International "North-South" Crete Transport Corridor No 9* referred to above is a pretext that exposes the artificiality of this arrangement. The combination of the words 'international', 'North-South', 'Crete', and 'Corridor No 9' showcases the highway making it appear too 'slick' and too 'puffed up' to be true. This is an example of Gogolian kitsch (*poshlost*) whereby 'ordinariness' is swamped by superlatives that hide the actual everyday realities.⁶⁶ A question posed to President Putin in one of the question-and-answer sessions in June 2006 aptly exposes the realities 'outside the picture'.

In the city of Voronezh there are practically no roads – there are only directions. Road maintenance is carried out selectively and sporadically. Would you consider paying us a visit and planning your route along the streets of Yushno-moravskaya, Voroshilova and Matrosova? It would be a unique opportunity to get these streets repaired. The forwarding companies refuse to travel to Voronezh, truck manufacturers are not willing to extend the guarantee on machines used in Voronezh, and cars for sale bear the label "not used in Voronezh".⁶⁷

The parallel realities of the 'international transport corridor' include the 'first Russian toll-road' "the Don" at a length of 40 kilometres in the Lipetskoi oblast, and the roads within the city limits or other parts of the 'corridor' that can best be described as directions.⁶⁸ Without some kind of convergence as far as these two

⁶⁴ The volume of Russian transit through Ukraine was reduced after the customs transit duties went up. The significance of the port of Novorossiisk increased at the same pace especially since the bulk of the cargo destined for the south-east of Europe and the Middle East was redirected from the port of Odessa to Novorossiisk. Tarkhov 1995, 253–256.

⁶⁵ Rosavtodor 2006.

⁶⁶ Nabokov 1963.

⁶⁷ Internet conference with President Vladimir Putin, 6.7.2006. URL: <http://president.yandex.ru>.

⁶⁸ The Minister of Transport, Igor Levitin, in a meeting of the Russian government on 14.6.2007 gave information according to which 117.7 km of "the Don" road were reconstructed in 2006. Levitin 2007.

realities are concerned, the prospects for facilitating the international road transit transport along the corridor seem miniscule.

By and large, the development of the international “North-South” transport corridor was about rebuilding the seaports and cargo terminals in the Russian part of the Gulf of Finland as well as in the Black Sea, including the rail and road connections to the ports.⁶⁹ However, the accomplishment of these tasks required the optimization of the interests of different administrative agencies and interest groups involved in the formulation of the ‘foreign transport policy’ of Russia. In the next chapter I will focus more closely on the problem of departmentalism and the solution presented in the guise of ‘strategic planning’.

18 The strategic planning: control/regulation

18.1 The mechanism of infrastructure building in Putin’s Russia

18.1.1 *Formalization of a strategic approach to infrastructure development*

The blueprints for the definition of the strategic tasks of transport infrastructure development were identified in the ‘Modernization of the Russian Transport System until 2002–2010’ Federal Target Programme and in the subsequent strategies on transport elaborated on between 2002 and 2005. In terms of the ‘international transport corridors’ the following problems have been pinpointed as requiring a “programme approach” at the federal level: the choice of the direction of the corridor and definition of the priorities of its development; the coordination of the development of different transport modes included in the corridor; and the definition of the optimal pace and rational order of realization of specific infrastructure projects in accordance with the requirements of international transport infrastructure, quality of transport, security and sustainability of transportation.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ This was explicitly stated by deputy minister of transport Vladimir Yakunin in an investment seminar in St. Petersburg in 2001. Yakunin 2001.

⁷⁰ Mintrans 2001b, 18. The content of the strategy does not depart radically from the goals set for the Federal Target Programme Modernization of the Russian Transport System until 2002–2010. One of the key differences between the two documents is the special emphasis in the latter on the improvement of the “security and stability of the transport system”. This

The first version of the Transport Strategy was publicly discussed at the All-Russian Conference: Transport Strategy of Russia in the Kremlin in December 2003, a follow-up to a similar conference held in December 1999. The issue was also discussed at several regional conferences organized during 2003. The work continued in 2004 and the final version of the 'Strategy of Transport of the RF until 2020', namely an elaborated version of the previous document, was approved by the Russian government in May 2005. A year later in July 2006 yet another document, 'Strategy of the development of transport of RF until 2010' was approved by Ministry of Transport. The latter document included description of tasks to be completed by 2010.⁷¹

The spirit of the discussions on transport strategy is captured in the statement President Putin gave at the State Council meeting in October 2003. According to Putin: "The State Council should not discuss so much about the current and departmental affairs as about fundamental approaches to an efficient transport policy of full value". In particular, the plans "should be directly linked to the strategy of the development of industry and be implemented with due consideration of the fundamental role of transport in the social, defence and international tasks of the nation".⁷²

The main priority of the state transport policy, according to Putin, is the development of "civilized competition" within the transport sphere, and the "complete modernization" of the branch. This requires, among other things, a "clear definition of the role and place of the state in the development of contemporary transport services". But all the plans for the improvement of the branch will remain just that – plans, unless the authorities start to work "correctly", according to the rules of "civilized markets" whereby the amount of red tape is reduced to a minimum and the border-crossing and customs procedures are "simplified". What is required, according to Putin, is a "systematic, thoughtful and consistent

goal refers both to the improvement of traffic safety and the mobilization potential of the country. The risk of acts of terrorism against the transport infrastructure is also mentioned in this connection. Terrorism was not mentioned in the text of the Modernization Programme. Mintrans 2005a, 8; Mintrans 2004c; Government of the RF 2001b.

⁷¹ The "Transport Strategy of the RF" document was approved to a large extent in the government meeting on 18.12.2003. The revised document was discussed again in the government meeting on 18.2.2004. The transport strategy until 2020 was finally approved by the government of Russia on 12.5.2005. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of RF 2003; Mintrans 2003b; Mintrans 2003c; Mintrans 2003d; Mintrans 2003e; Mintrans 2003f; ITAR-TASS 4.7.2003; Kommersant 22.1.2003; Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2003; Transport Rossii 8.12.2003; Mintrans 2004a; Mintrans 2005b; Government of the RF 2005; Mintrans 2006.

⁷² ITAR-TASS 28.10.2003.

approach” for how to go on.⁷³ The approach, as I will discuss in detail in the next two chapters, was inscribed into the idea(l) of strategic planning.

18.1.2 *The idea(l) of strategic planning*

To avoid a scenario whereby the “market mechanism”⁷⁴ would work against the state interest, Vladimir Putin, the future president of Russia, argued in his doctoral thesis that “an effective state regulatory mechanism” should be created.⁷⁵ The idea of “strategic planning” presented in the work illuminates the lines of reasoning that were aired in the public discussion on the state transport policy during 1997 and subsequently.

The call for strategic planning is obvious in a way since the infrastructure development by its very nature requires long-term planning and is generally considered to be one of the main spheres of state action. When the purpose is to look ahead of things, we tend to help that process along by drawing a map, or other graphical picture that helps in conceptualizing the possible and probable relations between things. George Steiner, writing on business planning in 1969, notes that “the word planning comes from the Latin word *planum*, meaning a flat surface”. The word entered the English language in the seventeenth century, referring principally to “forms, such as maps or blueprints that were drawn on flat

⁷³ Putin 2003b.

⁷⁴ Simply put, the market mechanism operates when individual economic units decide the levels of their economic activities with the general aim of benefiting their net economic positions, and prices respond to this interaction. See complete version and comparison with the “command principle” in Grossman 1963, 103–104.

⁷⁵ Putin 1997, 131. There are only a few western analysts who have actually read the work since it has been declared classified after Putin became Prime Minister of Russia. After the so-called Yukos affair in 2003, rumours about the thesis started to circulate in the western media. Balzer is among the first who has analytically sought to tackle the relation between Russia’s energy policy and Putin’s thesis. He also cites information according to which it is plausible to suggest that the thesis can be used as a background against which to analyse later state actions in the energy policy. Apart from the Yukos affair or other immediate concerns for western investors, I suggest that the thesis also helps in understanding the basis for the argumentation on ‘strategic planning’ which is important in respect of infrastructure modernization in Russia in general. What I aim to do is elaborate under what circumstances the notion of ‘strategic planning’ entered the Russian discussion. This helps to situate the concept within the larger framework of later government actions and their rationality. For an earlier discussion on Putin’s dissertation, see Balzer 2005; Shrimley 2005; Gaddy 2007. I am grateful to Doctor Pekka Sutela for providing me with this exceptional source of information.

surfaces”.⁷⁶ Max Weber, in his definition of instrumental rationality, explicitly ties the two together. In Weber’s terms:

Economic action’ is any peaceful exercise of an actor’s control over resources which is in its main impulse oriented towards economic ends. “Rational economic action” requires instrumental rationality in this orientation, that is, deliberate planning.⁷⁷

Moreover, irrationality of planning is hard to crack since even at the very common-sense level, the planning of future actions is not just rational, but a quite ubiquitous feature of reasoning. What we should be asking is to which question the ‘strategic planning’ envisioned by Putin is considered an appropriate answer? What is the subject of the planning and why?

The kind of solution envisioned in Putin’s thesis called for ‘guided markets’ where the state, represented by the state-owned companies, would function as the highest arbitrator. Although the thesis specifically refers to major Soviet economists involved in reformulating the planning principles of the late Soviet period, large parts actually originate from the book ‘Strategic Planning and Policy’ written by two American professors and published in 1978.⁷⁸ Thus, although the ‘strategic planning’ clearly echoes the economic management policies of the Soviet era, it would be too simplistic to think that it could be merely reduced to planning models used at that time.

18.1.3 The Soviet planning system and the problem of departmentalism

The chief daily task of the Soviet planning administration, as defined by Gregory Grossman in his classic study from 1963, “is the maintenance of balance with regard to each economic good over the short term”.⁷⁹ The planning process sought to attain a *redistribution* of resources in a way that would provide for “*the most rapid possible rate* of development, with the aim of *maximum* satisfaction of the current needs of the working masses and of bringing about *very rapidly* the full reconstruction of society on the principles of socialism and communism”.⁸⁰ What

⁷⁶ Mintzberg 2000, 14.

⁷⁷ Cited in Parsons 2003, 83.

⁷⁸ Corwin 2006.

⁷⁹ Grossman 1963, 108. In actual fact, the Soviet economy suffered from a chronic imbalance of supply and demand, hence the notion ‘shortage economy’. On Sovietology and the study of Soviet planning see Schroeder 1995.

⁸⁰ Definition by the Soviet economist Stanislav Strumilin, cited in Hanson 1997, 128.

was required to achieve this was a timely fulfillment of the plan, even if, as for example in the infamous case of the ton-kilometres, it actually defied common sense, or to put it more elaborately, efforts to minimize the transport costs.⁸¹ This example further illustrates the difference between the “coordinative planning” of the Soviet planning bodies, and that of the developmental planning, optimization planning or financial planning practised in the (western) market economies.

The call for “inter-departmental” or “inter-branch” coordination in the current parlance resembles similar objectives declared in the 1970s, although the situational context is quite different. In March 1973, a “comprehensive rationalization” of the inter-branch and the large-scale regional management structures was initiated. The objective of rationalization was “to distinguish strategic from operational decision-making through the deconcentration of authority”. The planning agencies were to be organized on a goal rather than a branch basis. In this connection, proposals were voiced to create “super ministries” which would be integrated into “integrated complexes in such related branches as fuel and energy, transportation, and the extractive and consumer goods industries”. The creation of specialized centralized organizations for managing major territorial projects such as the Baikal–Amur Railroad (BAM), the non-Black Earth Project (which included the development of the High-Speed Railway from St. Petersburg via Moscow to the Black Sea) and the development of Western Siberia, was also proposed.⁸²

Preceding these developments was the purported mathematical revolution in Soviet economic thought, which acquired practical form in the theory of optimal planning, later known as SOFE (the Theory of the Optimal Functioning of the Socialist Economy). SOFE was a normative theory in the sense that it “defined socialism as it should be” and, deriving from this, offered the decision-makers and planning institutes an optimal gadget with which to achieve the purported goal. Conceptually, SOFE was a failure, and its practical implementation slow in coming. Most of the proposals or decisions to improve the horizontal coordination between branch ministries, the State Committee for Science and Technology and Gosplan progressed no further than the paper they were written on.⁸³

⁸¹ This is a good example of two lines of thinking, the Classical approach that was growth-oriented and the Neoclassical one focusing on efficiency. The latter was beyond the official (especially Stalinist) political economy, but nevertheless existed in the Soviet Union and formed an important factor contributing to later developments in the mathematical economics of SOFE. Sutela 1984, 201; Rigby 1980, 20–21; Nove 1977, 98.

⁸² Conyngham 1982, 178, 252–254.

⁸³ Conyngham 1982, 252–254; for more on SOFE, see Sutela 1984.

The case of the inter-branch scientific-production unions created in the late 1960s is instructive. Their “autonomy and flexibility and operation outside of the institutional controls of the planning and financial systems clearly created concerns about loss of control on the part of the State Bank and Ministry of Finance”, writes Conyngham. Despite or due to these failures, he concluded, “the creation of effective organs for inter-branch and regional management remains a major task for rationalization in the 1980s”.⁸⁴ However, attempts to improve the planning methods by the Soviet economists were modest and, more importantly, did not provide a means of changing the system from within. This was mainly due to the inherent contradictions in the theories’ guiding economic policies (such as SOFE’s basic pseudo-scientific character) and problems in coordinating (with a view to controlling) various formal and informal agencies involved in the decision-making process.

In fact, the planning bureaucracy and other economic agencies formed an ‘administrative market’ that is best explained with a *matroshka* doll analogy. It concealed within itself several types of ‘markets’ from the legal to the semi-legal and illegal ‘black’ markets. These pseudo-markets (from the viewpoint of the economic theory) had emerged as an unintentional consequence of the Soviet planning market. Their functioning was a matter of bargaining, conducted in accordance with the unwritten and informal rules which, in effect, ensured the functioning of the formal, vertically oriented system.⁸⁵

From the viewpoint of theory this was a problem since, in general terms, planning means formalization. It is a “formalized procedure to produce an articulated result, in the form of an integrated system of decisions”. Formalization embraces three practices: to decompose, to articulate and, in particular, to rationalize the processes by which decisions are made and integrated into organizations. The process of planning, and strategic planning in particular, is geared to recognizing strengths and weaknesses and to situating them on a trajectory confined in temporal terms or in relation to a particular goal (or ideology). The problem is that it is difficult to know precisely whether a strength is a strength without acting in a specific situation to find out.⁸⁶ As I will discuss in more detail in the next two chapters, the task of improving the country’s transport and infrastructure

⁸⁴ Conyngham 1982, 252–254; Sutela 1984.

⁸⁵ Katsenelinboigen and Levine 1981, 61–70; Expert Institute of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs 1995, 88–89; Lewin 1974, 159; Sutela 1984, 202–203; Kordonskii 1995; Kordonskii 2006; Heusala 2005.

⁸⁶ Mintzberg 2000, 12, 279.

network illuminates the paradox of the Russian system: the simultaneous under-institutionalization and hyper-institutionalization of the state administration.

18.2 The inter-departmental transport complex (MTK)

18.2.1 *The complex development of the MTK*

The part of Putin's thesis that dealt with the infrastructure projects was titled: The 'concept of creating transport-technological port complexes in North-West Russia. The idea was to establish a transport system that would secure the trans-shipment of the "traditional freight flows", to improve the competitiveness of Russian products in the global markets, and to secure the "transport independence" of Russia from other countries. The creation of the modern "inter-departmental transport complex" (*Mezhotraslevogo Transportnogo Kompleksa*, MTK) in North-West Russia was presented as a means of achieving these objectives.⁸⁷ The notion of the MTK is a positive attribute of what is referred to in the discussion above as a problem of departmentalism.

In the mid-1990s several federal-level and presidential programmes were launched on the modernization of the transport and infrastructure system. These programmes were organized on a branch basis and included, for example, the presidential Roads of Russia programme, the programme on internal waterways and the revival of the trade fleet. All in all, these programmes were implemented from 18 to 57 per cent only. It was hoped that the establishment of the "inter-departmental transport complexes" would improve the poor coordination between the respective ministries and other relevant agencies in building the new port complexes and the related infrastructure base (roads, railways, logistical centres) that were critical for achieving the objectives of the policy.⁸⁸ It is plausible to argue that the resemblance between the Russian language acronym for 'international transport corridor' (MTK) and 'inter-departmental transport complex' ("MTK") is not 'just' about semantics but hints at what the 'international transport corridors' (MTK) are all about in Russia.

In the previous chapters (see especially chapters 11 and 17), I have identified several agencies involved in the coordination of the development of the transport

⁸⁷ Putin 1997, 111–112, 172.

⁸⁸ Mintrans 2004c, 6.

corridors. The working committee comprising the Finnish and Russian authorities, which was established in the early 1990s, evolved into a steering committee for corridor IX established by a joint agreement in 1995. In a similar vein, the coordination of the development of the “North–South” corridor is based upon an international agreement (and later, international ‘Consortium’) between the states (Russia, Iran, Oman, and subsequently also Kazakhstan and Belarus). Within these structures, the participating agency from Russia is the Ministry of Transport.

However, the notion of an ‘inter-departmental transport complex’ refers first and foremost to the coordination of the agencies of the Russian state administration involved in the development of the transport branch. In principle, the Modernization of the Transport System Federal Target Programme formalized the linkage between the concept of an ‘inter-departmental transport complex’ (“MTK”) and the ‘international transport corridor’ (MTK). The status ‘Federal Target Programme’ conferred on the programme the authority to implement structural reform policies in the economic and social spheres.⁸⁹

The agency responsible for monitoring the realization of the programme was established as the Ministry of Transport in 2002. The Federal State Institution FGU (*Federal’noe Gosudarstvennoe Uchrezhdenie*) *Rostransmodernizatsiya* was charged with implementing the programme. In May 2002 a separate sub-agency (*direktsiya*) was created with the task of monitoring the implementation of the ‘International Transport Corridors’ sub-programme. Formally, at least, the rearrangement of the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of Railways under a joint ministerial structure consolidated the authority of the former in the implementation of the target programme.⁹⁰

Up to the change in the ministerial structure in early 2004, the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of Railways held joint collegium meetings where the problems related to the securing of Russia’s foreign trade flows were addressed. The two ministries also had an inter-departmental working group for the ‘coordination and cooperation of the building of inland waterway, road and railway transport’. It has been involved, for example, in the coordination of the building of the port of Olya in the Astrakhan region.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Salicheva 2000, 96; Mintrans 2001b; Novosel’chev 2002; Mintrans 2004c; Mintrans 2005b.

⁹⁰ Mintrans 2002b. The amalgamation of the two ministerial structures was part of the railway reform policy and the establishment of the OAO Russian Railways Company on the basis of the Ministry of Railways.

⁹¹ Mintrans 2002a; Ruksha 2002; Yakunin 2001; Yakunin 2002; *Transport Rossii* 21.–27.10.2002.

In addition to working groups and committees established within the ministerial structures, several committees that deal with the transport sector are working under the Russian government. These include, for example, the committee on competitiveness, on tariff policy, and last but not least, a committee on transport politics.⁹² In late 2004 yet another new commission under the government was established called the 'State Committee on the Complex Development of the Transport System'.⁹³ In the first phase, the Prime Minister, Mihail Fradkov, headed the commission and it was assigned to meet at least once every six months. One of the main tasks on its agenda was the formulation of a mechanism for the public-private partnership in the development of large-scale infrastructure projects.⁹⁴

18.2.2 "MTK" and the public-private partnership

The public-private-partnership (PPP) mechanism and the law on Concessions are identified as the two most important instruments for financing and managing large-scale infrastructure projects.⁹⁵ The involvement of private investors is required since the budget resources are usually inadequate to tackle the growing needs of infrastructure development, a problem not confined to Russia. In the case of the latter, the conceptual basis for the delineation of the 'private' and 'public' sector spheres of action in terms of infrastructure development is elaborated on in the Transport Strategy.

The role of the state agency is identified in a section titled: The 'public regulation of transport operations: basic principles'. At the macro level the transport sector is approached as a "single regulated entity", while the existing indisputable differences between segments and the regions cannot be ignored. However, it is

⁹² Mintrans 2002b; Transport Rossii 21.-27.10.2002.

⁹³ Government of the RF 2004b.

⁹⁴ Vedomosti 8.10.2004; Government of the RF 2004b; Transport Rossii 15.11.2004; Parlamentskaya Gazeta 29.9.2004; PRAIM-TASS 17.11.2004; Radio Mayak 10.7.2005 12:14 MSK. In early 2007 the commission was reorganized under the Vice Prime Minister, Sergei Ivanov. The commission started to meet on a monthly basis and to elaborate on policies not just relating to transport but also to the development of industry and technology. The newly organized Commission has the right to issue orders to the federal executive agencies irrespective of their being represented in the commission or not. Government of the RF 2004b; PRAIM-TASS 28.2.2007.

⁹⁵ I am not suggesting that the public-private-partnership mechanism would be uncontroversial nor the only available way to finance large-scale projects in Russia or in the EU countries. Rather, the discussion in Russia has pinpointed the PPP model as the preferred one, although it is certainly not without its critics.

only “a coordinated development and interaction of various modes” that makes the transport sector “a unified system and gives it an additional systemic effect”. The spheres of state governance include a list of activities from “development of transport operations within a unified legal framework”, and a “coordinated development of the infrastructure of various modes, first and foremost, in transport junctions and accesses to them”, to “coordination of public and private interests and integration of public and private efforts in transport sector development” and “coordination of the interests and integration of the efforts of various executive authorities in respect of transport sector development and “matching” (*stykovky*) of regional transport networks”.⁹⁶

“The underlying principle of the public transport policy”, as noted in the document, “is the separation of transport sector governance from business functions. While restricting its functions as a business entity, the state enhances the efficiency of transport sector regulation, employing it to improve the quality of transport services and reduce transport-related costs”.⁹⁷ This line of thinking is compatible with the one advocated in the OECD regulatory reform policy that focused on *transformation* of the way in which state agencies work, not *reduction* of the state’s role *as such*.⁹⁸

However, the OECD review of the reform of the state agencies published in November 2006 did not see much change either in the efficiency of the executive agencies or in the reduction of the conflict of interest between the major agencies. On the contrary, the major reorganization “disrupted the work of many government bodies for much of 2004” and not much improvement has resulted in creating regulatory agencies that are genuinely independent and shielded from outside pressure. The rent-seeking behaviour, inefficiency and unresponsiveness of state administrators either to public or higher political authorities are listed

⁹⁶ The list includes a total of ten spheres of federal agentive actions in addition to those already mentioned: “the balanced distribution of budget funds between various modes, the development of intermodal operations, the coordinated supply of transport facilities for the needs of national security and defence systems, the regulation of intermodal competition, and the establishment of common information space in the transport sector. Mintrans 2004c, 10.

⁹⁷ Mintrans 2004c, 10.

⁹⁸ In a recent OECD review on the implementation of regulatory reform in Russia, the transformation of the state agency was singled out as the “toughest reform challenge”. As described in the study, it “entails the creation of new regulatory institutions and new market-oriented forms of regulation – that is, regulatory issues that have themselves arisen as a result of market reforms”. OECD 2005, 17.

as the main impediments in the implementation of “any policies that require administrative or regulatory capacities of a high order”.⁹⁹

By 2004 no major legislative breakthrough had been achieved in the transport sector. The law on ‘toll-roads’ was yet to be approved at that time,¹⁰⁰ while the elaboration of the law on concessions had faded into the background.¹⁰¹ The first priority, the OECD report argued, should be “effective implementation of the government’s administrative reform”.¹⁰² It would curtail inefficiency and unresponsiveness to either the public or executive authorities of the state bureaucracy and provide for actual implementation of the government policies.

In the context of the discussion on the federal transport policy, these deviations at the policy-implementation level were addressed, although not tackled. The concept of the state transport politics that was elaborated on in 1997 was the first attempt to address the departmentalism that hampered transport and infrastructure modernization. Later versions of the coordination of the inter-departmental actions were developed with a special task in mind: the building of the port complexes in the Russian part of the Gulf of Finland.

⁹⁹ OECD 2006b, 7.

¹⁰⁰ The law on motor roads and road management of the RF was approved in the state Duma in late 2007. Ogoniok 29.10.–4.11.2007, 8.

¹⁰¹ For example, the Minister of Transport in his speech at the government session in 14.6.2007 did not mention the law on concessions, although he did speak about private-public partnership. According to newspaper reports, German Greff has blocked the adoption of the law on concessions. Levitin 2007; Izvestiya 15.6.2007; Kommersant 1.4.2005; Mintrans 2004c, 30–44; Misharina 2006; Kommersant 5.10.2005; Kommersant 7.5.2004; Transport Rossii 2.–8.7.2001; Transport Rossii 20.2.2006; Yakovlev 2006, 1052.

¹⁰² OECD 2006b, 7.

18.3 Creativity in the use of language and the vertical administration

18.3.1 *Forging a path for Russia*

A Russian Sea Port. Established in 199-.

Oil terminal. The Baltic Pipeline System. Primorsk.
Established on 31st March 2000.¹⁰³

“It is not a tsar’s business to know the details about a port in Primorsk – all that happened was that a few words were exchanged over dinner”.¹⁰⁴ Russian political analyst Andrei Piontkovsky is right in principle for “a few words exchanged over dinner” could easily have been forgotten. But not quite, since the report on the discussion held between President of Finland Martti Ahtisaari and President of Russia Boris Yeltsin in Helsinki made it publicly known what the two governments were planning at the time. That in turn triggered an episode that captures the complexity of the building of the new ports in the Gulf of Finland.

The ORT television channel reported on April 12, 1994 that President Yeltsin had approved the construction of a 2 billion USD crude oil link from the Kirishi refinery in Russia to an oil port at Porvoo (Sköldvik) near Helsinki. According to ORT, a deal was struck in March with President Ahtisaari during the US-Russian summit in Helsinki. This was news to the Leningrad region authorities, who were immediately dispatched to Moscow in order to find out what had happened and, most importantly, to ascertain what it would imply for the plans to build a new oil terminal at Primorsk, in the Leningrad region. For a week, the regional authorities tried to reach representatives of the government and the respective ministries for comment, but failed to acquire any information about the decision. The deputy to the oblast’s transport minister, Vladimir Smirnov, even asked Minister of Transport Nikolai Tsakh to find the journalist in question, but to no avail. “No one would tell us who put this information forward [or] the name of this reporter or tell us why they would not name him,” Smirnov complained.¹⁰⁵

The regional authorities’ frustration was understandable since they were in danger of losing lucrative business. “If the Finns get the oil pipeline”, they

¹⁰³ A plaque on a commemorative stone at Primorsk. Cited in Häkkinen 2003, 29.

¹⁰⁴ Andrei Piontkovsky, Director of the Centre for Strategic Studies in Moscow. St. Petersburg Times 21.–27.4.1997.

¹⁰⁵ St. Petersburg Times 28.4.–4.5.1997; St. Petersburg Times 21.–27.4.1997.

reasoned, “the oblast will lose billions of dollars”. To this end, the Leningrad region authorities invited interested deputies from the State Duma to come to St. Petersburg to demonstrate further commitment to the project, to lobby the government on the port, or at least to “make a fuss about the project”, as Smirnov described the intended outcome of the gathering.¹⁰⁶ In actual fact, the “fuss about the project” had already started long ago. The episode about talks between the two presidents was just one of those instances when it became public news.

During the spring of 1994, the Finnish oil company Neste had held high-level negotiations with Russian government authorities and with the Transneft company over a plan to build a new crude oil pipeline to Porvoo.¹⁰⁷ In the documents prepared by the Finnish party, the new pipeline is presented as complementary, rather than as an alternative to the Primorsk port. It is identified as the “first phase” in the overall development scheme aimed at substantially increasing the Russian oil export capacity. The second phase would comprise the building of a new oil terminal and, subsequently, an oil pipeline to Primorsk. The preliminary study on the financial feasibility of the pipeline between Kirishi and Porvoo was to be completed in autumn 1994 and it was estimated that the pipeline would be operational in early 1998. At the same time, the Finns took the issue to the European Commission and proposed the pipeline as one of the priority projects for review by Christophersen’s working group in September 1994. This option failed to materialize and the pipeline project was not included among the prioritized projects of the “Trans-European Energy Networks”.¹⁰⁸

At the same time, the Russian government was considering the development of three new ports in the Gulf of Finland. The port development plan originated in the government decree issued in April 1993 in which the Ministry of Transport was instructed, together with the Leningrad region and the St. Petersburg city administration, to coordinate the construction of three new ports in the Russian part of the Gulf of Finland. The port of Ust-Luga in the Kingiseppskii district would specialize in general cargo, timber and bulk freight, and containers with a projected capacity of 35 million tons. The port of Primorsk would handle oil and oil products up to 45 million tons per year, while the port of Buhta Batareinaya in

¹⁰⁶ Earlier that same year, the oblast Governor, Vadim Gustov, estimated that building a port at Primorsk and a new oil pipeline to it would bring the region revenues of up to 720 million USD a year. *St. Petersburg Times* 28.4.–4.5.1997; *St. Petersburg Times* 9.–15.3.1997.

¹⁰⁷ The Russian party was said to be interested in paying off its debt of more than 700 million USD to Finland as well as receiving large tax revenues from the oil exports and transport fees through the state-owned Transneft pipeline company. *St. Petersburg Times* 9.–15.3.1997; *St. Petersburg Times* 28.4.–4.5.1997; *St. Petersburg Times* 21.–27.4.1997.

¹⁰⁸ Mintec 1994a; *Trans-European Networks* 1994, 210; Toikka 2003, 248.

the Lomonovskii district would also specialize in oil products with a capacity of 15 million tons per year.¹⁰⁹

The actual building was to be commenced by those shareholder companies specifically established for the task, whereas the controlling stake in the new companies as well as the overall management of the project was to be held by the state. The building of the three new ports was to “facilitate the development of a transport system that secures the foreign economic interests of the Russian Federation”.¹¹⁰ However, with the exception of Buhta Batareinaya, none of the port complexes had attracted domestic or foreign investments by early 1995.¹¹¹ It seemed at the time that the president’s message for future generations, secured in a capsule and ceremonially placed inside the foundation stone of the new port in Batareinaya Bay, 65 kilometres west of St. Petersburg, was to be forgotten at the outset.¹¹²

18.3.2 Putting presidential authority into play

The building of the three ports gained fresh impetus with a presidential decree on “securing freight transit through the Gulf of Finland” dated June 6, 1997. The decree authorized the building of the new ports at Primorsk, Ust-Luga and Buhta Batareinaia, as well as reconstruction of the large St. Petersburg port. The port construction was considered appropriate in order to “secure Russia’s national interests and economic security” in the sphere of transit transportation and the export of “strategically important” crude oil and oil products.¹¹³

As stated in the press, the decree was issued in the framework of the “Russia’s European Gateway” programme, approved in April 1997 by President Yeltsin. The programme was directed at the “complex development of all modes of transport” in St. Petersburg, including sea, rail, road, inland-waterway, air and even pipeline infrastructure.¹¹⁴ In his public statements concerning the infrastructure

¹⁰⁹ Government of the RF 1993.

¹¹⁰ Government of the RF 1993.

¹¹¹ Reported by Dmitrii Sergeev, head of the government agency overseeing the three port construction projects in a press conference on developments during 1994. *Kommersant* 25.1.1995.

¹¹² *Oktyabr’skaya Magistral* 21.6.1997; *StB TV Inform-TV* 21.6.1997 13:30.

¹¹³ *Ukaz Prezidenta RF* N554 6.6.1997.

¹¹⁴ *Kommersant* 12.4.1997; *Sankt-Peterburgskie Vedomosti* 10.4.1997; *Nevskoe Vremia* 28.6.1997; *Sankt-Peterburgskie Vedomosti* 9.6.1997; *Nevskoe Vremya* 22.5.1997; *Kommersant* 27.5.1997.

modernization, the Mayor of St. Petersburg, Vladimir Yakovlev, was consistent in arguing that the development of the three new ports, as well as developments concerning the improvement of the road infrastructure towards Finland, was part of the “Russia’s European Gateway” programme. In the regional discourse, the programme quickly supplanted the notion of ‘Corridor IX’ as the main reference point for the major infrastructure projects. As Yakovlev put it in June 1997, the application of the EU schemes, instructions and regulations would proceed within the framework of this programme.¹¹⁵

Speaking at the meeting of the Finnish-Russian working group on cross-border cooperation in early June 1997, Gennadii Tkachev, representative of the St. Petersburg city administration, emphasized that the programme was under the “direct personal control” of President Yeltsin, and that “the axis of the project was a grandiose Helsinki–St. Petersburg–Moscow highway”. In addition, the widening of the sea canal to the large port of St. Petersburg by half a metre in summer 1997 was regarded as an action that would “stimulate development of the ‘Russia’s European Gateway’ programme”.¹¹⁶

In the regional discussion it was emphasized that the programme would “realize Peter the Great’s idea to integrate Russia with Western Europe”. The three new ports, as Minister Tsakh noted on one occasion, would make up an “organic part of the European transport corridors”. From the Western viewpoint, it is worth remembering that Pushkin’s words, often quoted by the authorities in Russia, speak about “forging a window to Europe” (*rubit’ okno v Evropu*), rather than its ‘opening’ to Europe as the saying is often translated.¹¹⁷ For when speaking about “opening a window”, in everyday understanding, one expects that the house already exists. Whereas when one refers to “forging a window” it denotes the building of the window *and* the house.

The building of the Primorsk port signified forging a path for Russia’s energy exports that would give sufficient room for manoeuvre and increase oil exports to the world markets. This objective was clearly stated in the numerous decrees

¹¹⁵ SpB TV inform-TV 8.6.1997; IA RosBalt 7.5.1997; Nevskoe Vremya 5.5.1997; PRAIM-TASS 9.6.1997; Sankt-Peterburgskie Vedomosti 27.6.1997; Nevskoe Vremya 28.6.1997.

¹¹⁶ IA Rosbalt 10.6.1997; Nevskoe Vremia 24.6.1997; Nevskoe Vremia 15.7.1997; Sankt-Peterburgskie Vedomosti 23.7.1997. The Tacis study started in November 1998 reports that about 50 per cent of the handling capacity in the port of St. Petersburg had exceeded its normal lifespan. It had, however, at that time sufficient trans-shipment capacity for container transport. Tacis 1998, 172.

¹¹⁷ Sankt-Peterburgskie Vedomosti 23.7.1997; cf. Prime Minister Kasyanov in an interview by ORT (Vremya) 12.9.2000; the head of the Russian Railways Vladimir Yakunin in Izvestiya 7.8.2006; cf. Kommersant 25.1.2006..

and decisions issued during the Yeltsin presidency. However, implementation of what was planned required not just massive investments in the infrastructure but the coordinated actions of the regional and federal authorities, as well as private and foreign investors.

The question was: Under whose roof was the port development organized? From the viewpoint of the federal agencies, the activities of the regional authorities in the framework of Russia's European Gateway programme seemed problematic. This was because the 'federal transport' infrastructure to which the port of St. Petersburg and the Helsinki–St. Petersburg–Moscow highway belonged was exclusively a sphere of federal jurisdiction.¹¹⁸ However, both the federal and the regional governments lacked the money required for the completion of the building process.

One of the initiatives introduced to improve the coordination between different levels of the state administration was called the "Inter-departmental programme (*mezhotraslevaya programma*) for the transport-technological securing of transit through the Gulf of Finland".¹¹⁹ Discussion around the inter-departmental programme soon faded from the public discussion, only to reappear later in connection with the international transport corridor concept. Instead, the main attention was focused on a plan to establish an international consortium dubbed the "Baltic Pipeline System" (*Baltiiskaya Truboprovodnaya Sistema*). It was designed to channel the domestic and foreign private investments into the building of the oil port at Primorsk.¹²⁰

At this point in time, the regional authorities and their foreign partners (such as the World Bank, and some German developers) were active participants in the scheme. Even if western experts considered it unlikely that the port development plans would materialize. This was mainly because of the "scarcity of funds available for investment in Russia" and because the required investments in this case were "enormous".¹²¹ As Bent Larsen, president of Lamor Corporation, commented in spring 2003, "in many places it was thought that Primorsk would not be built, yet it took only one year for the terminal to start functioning. When we talk of these oil companies and the resources they have, nothing is beyond them".¹²² However, as far as the construction of port complexes in the Russian

¹¹⁸ Salischeva 2000, 90–91.

¹¹⁹ Ukaz Prezidenta RF N554 6.6.1997; PRAIM-TASS 8.12.1997.

¹²⁰ PRAIM-TASS 28.10.1997; PRAIM-TASS 28.1.1998; Government of the RF 1997a.

¹²¹ St. Petersburg Times 9.–15.3.1997; Kommersant 25.1.1995; Tacis 1998, 174, 234–235.

¹²² Cited in Toikka 2003, 250.

part of the Gulf of Finland was concerned, it remained unclear just which of the numerous ceremonial openings would actually materialize until December 27, 2001 when the Primorsk oil port was inaugurated in the presence of President Vladimir Putin.¹²³

18.3.3 Completion of the building process

In general, it can be said that the identification of state strategic interests is a circular process: a game played in accordance with the rules defined in the process of playing. In other words, saying that something is of “strategic importance” is a performative speech act, making it a case where a purported goal is indeed of *strategic importance*. In the context of Russia’s current administrative market, the declaration of a particular project as ‘strategic’ indicates the commitment of the federal executive agencies towards *completion* of the project. This is important for, as the list of prioritized projects of the Transport Strategy suggests, most of the projects, with the exception of the port complexes, are in fact of the *dolgostroi* type, being first introduced during the Soviet period.¹²⁴

In addition, once the purported goal is declared and approved as ‘strategic’, it is legitimate for the state authorities *not* to limit their actions within the formal rules of the game. President Putin’s statement at the opening of a new phase of construction of the Ust-Luga port complex in January 2006 illustrates this. He started by saying: “As we all know there is a form of protest and sabotage that is called *to work according to regulations (pravilam)*”. Addressing the high-ranking federal officials he continued by emphasizing: “I ask you to take the circumstances into consideration and to show flexibility in the decision-making on important and large-scale projects that the country needs”.¹²⁵

Thus, the president invited the responsible officials to circumvent administrative “bottle-necks” in a flexible manner in order to see to it that the declared policy priorities were fulfilled. On this occasion, Putin was clearly not advocating actions in accordance with the “civilized markets”, but instead used another term, *sabotage*, which harks back to the Soviet period when “wreckers” and “sabotage” were blamed for the underperformance of the Plan. The personal

¹²³ The currency crisis delayed the completion of the first phase of the oil terminal at Primorsk. The building had started in 1999 and the maximum capacity of the new port was 12 mt in 2001. The planned capacity of the terminal is 30 mt. Häkkinen 2003, 29–31.

¹²⁴ Mintrans 2004c, 48. Top of the list is the construction of the Chita–Khabarovsk Highway.

¹²⁵ Telekanal “Channel One”, Vremya 24.1.2006 21:00 MSK; Kommersant 25.1.2006..

tone, “I ask you”, further indicates that the best way to navigate a preferred project through the maze of administrative rules and regulations is via the president’s desk.

We may draw the inference that within the limits of playing in accordance with the informal and unwritten rules of the game (that outsiders have difficulty to gain access to prior to the action), one needs to be inventive. This is clearly a contradiction when it comes to the planning philosophy, where it is the system that is trusted to be reliable and consistent, and the point is to transform every inconsistency stemming from the ‘human factor’ into the formality and rationality of the plan.¹²⁶ However, in the context of Russian politics, the interface between formal and informal (and as yet unwritten) rules is not clear-cut but has a ‘zigzagging’ form. The phenomenon of zigzagging is a combination of imitation and subversion of the rules of the game. It has its roots in Soviet politics (see chapter 9.2.2) but we should refrain from making direct comparisons between the Soviet period and current Russian politics.

In his study on the last Soviet generation, Alexei Yurchak shows how the Soviet discourse from the late 1950s evolved towards ‘hypernormalization’. What he means by this is that “the discourse as a whole mediated knowledge as something that is always already known rather than as new assertions”. What is important from the viewpoint of the planning discourse is that the “normalized principles of discourse contributed to the growing anonymity of the authorial voice and to the ever greater normalization of texts”.¹²⁷ As a result, the constative dimension (the fit between words and the world) of this language became open and unpredictable. It was more and more difficult to ascertain the specific ‘object of intention’ in the particular action and, even more importantly for our purposes, an agency responsible for the action. This contributed to the emergence of “discursive simulacra” where, in the words of Mikhail Epstein, “any reality that differed from the ideology simply ceased to exist”.¹²⁸

Yurchak notes that Epstein overlooks the fact that the authoritative language retained a powerful performative function. With the ceasing of the constative function of language use, people did not take authoritative statements literally, but they were nevertheless engaged in the performative dimension of the language use. They participated in the rituals by repeating precise language forms which,

¹²⁶ Mintzberg 2000, 222.

¹²⁷ Yurchak 2006, 60.

¹²⁸ Cited in Yurchak 2006, 75.

in the words of Austin, secured “an uptake”.¹²⁹ What Yurchak points at is that certain creativity in the language use “enabled the Soviet people to engage in the production of new forms and meanings of reality that were tangible, multiple, and grounded in the ‘real world’”.¹³⁰ With the hypernormalization of the language use towards the end of the Soviet period, the agentive context of the action became blurred since the anonymous author could not function as a seat of authority. This contributed to the dominance of the performative rather than the constative dimension of language use.

In this study I have referred to this phenomenon as ‘razzmatazz’. A case in point is the commission for the complex development of the transport infrastructure which, at the beginning of January 2007, became one of the stages in the forthcoming presidential elections (2008). The establishment of the commission does not indicate effective government *control* over the ‘strategic sectors’ of economy. Rather it is a trace of ‘razzmatazz’ and the continuing dominance of the performative dimension in Russian politics.

One of the objectives for the development of international transport corridors identified above is the maintenance of the coherence of the Russian political-economic space and the diversification of the economy. The slogan ‘integration 1520’ coined in the framework of the railway reform takes note of these challenges but also goes beyond them by addressing the role of Russia in the post-Soviet space.

19 Integration 1520: coherence/diversification

19.1 The united transport system (ETS)

The Primorsk oil port and other similar installations in the Russian part of the Gulf of Finland were considered to be the most “efficient” projects in socioeconomic terms. As expressed in the transport strategy, the state should “refuse the full-scale funding of commercially viable projects” or “potentially competing investments projects” and instead “concentrate budget resources on the implementation of

¹²⁹ Austin 1965.

¹³⁰ Yurchak 2006, 76. Isaiah Berlin in his essay from 1956 describes the same phenomenon, although he does not draw the same conclusion as Yurchak. Berlin 2004, 124–125.

projects that are the most *efficient* in socioeconomic terms”.¹³¹ The most efficient projects are those that conform to “the priorities of Russia’s National Energy Strategy until 2020 and projected balances of fuel and energy resources”. “First of all”, the text continues, “it means the strategic modernization and development of the existing trunk pipeline system and transport infrastructure that supports the export of oil, oil products, coal and natural gas”.¹³² It can be concluded, therefore, that the development of Russian international transport corridors largely boils down to the development of infrastructures that provide improved connections to the port complexes and other installations critical for energy exports.

This is not the whole story, however. The transport strategy (2004 version) was prepared at a time when the Russian economy was moving into a “sustainable growth phase” and it was based on an “accelerated *diversification* scenario”. It meant that transport infrastructure development is expected to become a “catalyst for the development and improvement of the competitiveness of the Russian economy, and an improvement in living standards and regional development, as well as an important instrument for Russia’s active geostrategic positioning”. To meet these expectations “the transport sector would require large investments for the elimination of infrastructure constraints and for its technological modernization”.¹³³ In short, investments in transport and infrastructure development were seen against the framework of the competitiveness of Russia in the international markets.

In this context, the notion of transport corridor is identified as providing a “*spatial model* of baseline transport network development”.¹³⁴ Convertibility between the notion of ‘transport corridor’ and that of the ‘baseline transport network’ is an indication of how the problem of maintaining and enhancing the coherence of Russia’s economic and political space should be solved. The baseline network by definition is “a system of communication links and transport nodes that provides a sustainable connection between the largest settlements and economic centres, supports major external economic relations and ensures the spatial and functional integrity of the transport system”. The emphasis on the baseline network also underlined need for coordinated development of the transport branch as a whole.¹³⁵

¹³¹ Mintrans 2004c, 13.

¹³² Mintrans 2004c, 20–21; Finansovye Izvestiya 6.2.2003.

¹³³ Mintrans 2004c; Mintrans 2005a, 7.

¹³⁴ Mintrans 2004c, 23.

¹³⁵ Mintrans 2004c, 20–21; Finansovye Izvestiya 6.2.2003; Zvorykina 2005; Mintrans 2006.

Due to the underdevelopment of roads, the main reference point here is the railway network. A certain shift may be detected in the recent discussion from the notion of ‘corridor’ to a more diffuse understanding of the infrastructures. This is inscribed in the term “Integration 1520”. The concept refers to the facilitation of cooperation among those countries that share the broad railway gauge (see preface, note 2).¹³⁶ It thus denotes rebuilding (*obustroistvo*) not just the baseline network in Russia but, to some extent, the integration of the post-Soviet space.¹³⁷ At the same time, in the transport strategy, the Pan-European Corridors on the territory of Russia are identified as having “regional meaning”.¹³⁸ To assess what this means I will take a look at the railway-building project between Ledmozero and Kotchkoma in the republic of Karelia and its conceptualization as a part of the Archangelsk Corridor. This particular railway project also helps in tracing the argumentation for the coherence and diversification of the Russian polity.

19.2 Building a railway between Ledmozero and Kotchkoma

19.2.1 A missing link

The main overland transport axis in Karelia runs in a north-south direction as part of the national rail and road link between St. Petersburg and Murmansk. From the viewpoint of the adjacent regions, the Murmansk railway was, and largely still is, a “corridor without doors”.¹³⁹ Most of the railway construction projects carried out by the Soviet government focused on the building of the missing links to the northern coast of Russia. An exception to the general rule was the railway

¹³⁶ An idea promoted by Yakunin is interesting from the viewpoint of Finland since it ties Finland into the discursive context of ‘the Russian Empire’ and, since the opening up of Finnish rail freight markets at the beginning of 2007, in principle presents the possibility of Russian Railways expanding its operations to Finland. The opening up of the Finnish rail freight market was part of the full opening up of the European rail freight market which commenced on 1 January 2007. Eisenkopf 2006, 292; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of RF 20.1.2006; Edinaya Lenta Novostei 20.1.2006; Izvestiya 26.10.2005; cf. URL: www.forum1520.com.

¹³⁷ Concept of coordinated transport policy of the CIS countries was elaborated by St. Petersburg based International Academy of Transport in 2001. International Academy of Transport 2001.

¹³⁸ Mintrans 2004c, 54.

¹³⁹ In 1934 it had only 129 km of sidetracks, of which 31 km were in the territory of Karelian ASSR. Juntunen 1997, 14–19, 28–59, 112; Autio 2002, 73; Lausala and Valkonen 1999, 131–133.

between Belomorsk and Obozersk, which provided a link between the port of Murmansk and the ports in the Archangelsk region.¹⁴⁰ The collapse of the Soviet Union opened up the possibility of a new line of argumentation to emerge whereby the building of ‘exceptions’, that is the east-west oriented connections between the regions in Northwest Russia, shifted into the foreground of attention.

The map below (Map 7) shows one of the ‘missing links’ located between Ledmozero station some 80 km east of Kostamuksha, a hometown of the iron ore-mining and processing enterprise (*gorno-obogatitel’nyi kombinat*, GOK) *Karelian Okatysh* and Kochkoma station on the Murmansk railway.



Map 7. The Archangelsk Corridor. Source: Tielaitos et al. 2000.¹⁴¹

The railway and the road from the Finnish–Russian border (Vartiuss–Kivijärvi/ Lyttä) to the city of Kostamuksha and as far as Ledmozero had been built between 1977 and 1984 at the same time as the construction of the ore-mining and processing plant in the town of Kostamuksha. The railway provided a direct link to import iron ore and other raw materials from the new plant to the metallurgical

¹⁴⁰ The track provided a second route running from inland to the northern port of Murmansk and thus helped to reduce traffic along the Murmansk railway. It was built by the Belomorsk labour camp organized by the NKVD and completed in September 1941. Juntunen 1997, 147–156.

¹⁴¹ Reproduced with the kind permission of Tielaito, Oulu, Finland.

industry in the Oulu region in Finland. The railway section running eastwards from the new industrial town to the Murmansk railway was already included in the original joint Finnish-Russian cooperation agreement signed in 1973.¹⁴² In the late 1980s, Finnish and Soviet parties held negotiations about the possibility of adding new commodities to the list of products transported through the Vartius border-crossing point, and also about the construction of the remaining railway connection. The Finns argued that the building of a new connection between Kochkoma and Ledmozero would reduce the cost of freight transport from Archangelsk and other adjacent regions to Finland. It would also open up new possibilities for transit traffic from Europe through the Finnish ports of Oulu and Kemi along the Trans-Siberian railway to the Asia Pacific region.¹⁴³

The decision to build the railway was made in the late 1980s, but the actual construction didn't get underway until the beginning of the 1990s. In the first phase, the missing link between Ledmozero and Kochkoma was to become the first private railway in the new Russia. The Gelleflint Company in charge of carrying out the construction was founded in October 1990, and the new railway section was scheduled for completion by 1995. In accordance with this plan, the so-called construction traffic at the twenty-second kilometre of the railway was ceremonially opened in December 1994.¹⁴⁴ The Finns became involved in the project through a joint Finnish-Russian consortium (Nowe Rail) that was established to facilitate completion of the new railway, and the building of a social infrastructure including a 'Business Park', tourist resorts and other services adjacent to the railway, in a manner reminiscent of the Finnish-Soviet cooperation in the 1970s. Finnish and Russian parties negotiated about a possible Finnish loan for the project (to be granted by the Finnish Railways) but that scheme failed to materialize. Between 1996–1999, the construction work once again ground to a halt and restarted only after a majority share in the Gelleflint Company was bought by the Ministry of Railways.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² During 1973–76, Finnish firms built a railway and a highway stretching from the state border up to the building site, a distance of about 40 km. Kulev 1983, 133; Asetus 72/1973.

¹⁴³ This view was also supported by the Russian Ministry of Economics in its statement published in connection with the discussion on the private builder of the Railway. Kommersant 28.2.1995; Kaleva 25.10.1988; Progress Report 2002.

¹⁴⁴ The construction was financed through share capital, loans and tolls to be collected from the railway users. The company shareholders included the cities of Moscow and St. Petersburg, the Republic of Karelia, October Railways and 12 other companies and corporations. The shareholders, in particular the Moscow city government, set their sights on road metal being transported to expanding road and construction markets in Moscow. Transport Rossii 26.7.2004; Northlink Loppuraportti 2006; Mintec 1995.

¹⁴⁵ Northlink Loppuraportti 2004; Transport Rossii 26.7.2004; Mintec 1995, 3.

The aims of the early development plans were pragmatic. The Gelleflint Company had acquired the right to develop the land on both sides of the track (a total width of 20 km). This created a legal (although not undisputed) basis for the development of the 'Business Park'. It also provided the means for a more straightforward use of the land in the form of forestry resources which were to be cut down along the planned track. The aim of the development was expressed bluntly in a feasibility study for the new track. The company expected to 'benefit from the natural resources of the area in the future. This requires fast and reliable traffic connections inside Russia and to the western markets'. Another important factor that spoke in favour of the new route was the surplus of wood material in Northwest Russia which coincided with the increasing deficit experienced by the Nordic forest industry.¹⁴⁶

In October 2006, the Railways newspaper *Gudok* stated that 'by 2009 OAO Russian Railways will have invested 923 million roubles in the completion (*dostroika*) of the Ledmozero-Kotchkoma track, and as a result *regular working traffic (rabochee dvizhenie)* will be commenced'. This was interesting news because in late 2001 the track had *already* been opened to such traffic, meaning that no more than seven trains per day could run along the new track.¹⁴⁷ The Finns and other interested parties had been waiting for the moment when *commercial traffic*, namely regular high-quantity traffic, could be commenced on the track.¹⁴⁸ The steel industry in northern Finland was willing to import more iron pellets from the ore-mining and processing enterprise *Karelian Okatysh* located in Kostamuksha. Finnish cities such as Oulu and Kemi, on the other hand, had set their sights on the new track being opened to commercial traffic routed to their ports.¹⁴⁹

In 2004, in response to Finnish criticism over the slow pace in completing the new railway link, Valery Shlyamin, trade representative of the Russian Federation in Finland, used reasoning similar to that of the Finnish transport authorities in the mid-1990s when they spoke about 'Corridor IX'. Shlyamin noted that the

¹⁴⁶ Mintec 1995, 4; Jaakko Pöyry Consulting 1996, 57–60; Jaakko Pöyry Consulting 2001.

¹⁴⁷ *Gudok* 13.10.2006; *Gudok* 6.7.2006; *Helsingin Sanomat* 20.2.2001.

¹⁴⁸ The representative of the Russian Ministry of Railways, Boris Sitkov, informed the participants of the BEATA Steering Committee in September 2001 that commercial traffic would be started by the end of 2002 and the electrification of the line would be completed in 2002. Progress report 2002; PRAIM-TASS 23.9.2004.

¹⁴⁹ Currently the bulk of freight traffic through the Vartius border-crossing point to Finland consists of timber. In 1999 timber accounted for 90 per cent of the total freight volume and railway transport for 80 per cent of the western-bound traffic through Vartius. The volume of shipments from the Kostamuksha plant to the Finnish metallurgical industry of Rautaruukki in Raahé is one million tons per annum and is expected to grow in the future. *Gudok* 10.3.2005; Suunnittelukolmio 1999, 6.

Northern Corridor was included on neither the pan-European nor the Russian maps depicting the international transport corridors. For this reason, foreign and domestic investments in the project were slow to materialize. To address this situation, Shlyamin proposed that a new cooperation mechanism should be established which would help in solving the financing problems. It should be a Finnish-Russian joint venture, or at least a ‘working group’¹⁵⁰ with the aim of securing foreign investments (preferably an EBRD loan) for the completion of the construction. The reference to the EBRD was in line with the earlier developments around the railway as the bank had expressed its interest in the project as early as 1995–1996.¹⁵¹ Although Shlyamin succeeded in allaying Finnish criticism in the rhetorical sense with his new proposal and the promise of the punctual commencement of commercial traffic along the track, his comments do in fact demonstrate how the communication gap widened whilst the ‘connectivity’ gap was almost closed.

19.2.2 *The Archangelsk Corridor and the Barents Euro-Arctic Transport Area*

In a feasibility study published in 1995 the ‘Ledmozero-Kochkoma Railroad Project’ is defined as:

A part of the Archangelsk Corridor connecting Russia with the European Union. The border between Russia and Finland is also the only border Russia has with the EU. The Ledmozero-Kotchkoma railway connects the Russian and Finnish railways. It is considered to be the most important infrastructure project of the Archangelsk Corridor.¹⁵²

The above map (Map 4) was published as a part of the ‘Oulu–Karelia–Archangelsk–Komi Corridor’ pre-study and introduced by the provincial state office of Oulu in 1995. The starting point and principal aim of the cooperation was to improve the transport infrastructure connections (rail, road, airlines) that would link the regions directly with each other rather than via the capitals or respective

¹⁵⁰ The joint Finnish-Russian logistics commission had been established in February 2003 and it included all the major regional and state agencies involved in the process since the mid-1990s. At the Kajaani seminar where Shlyamin was speaking, the Northlink project handed the Finnish and Russian authorities a memorandum that envisioned further development of the corridor. Northlink loppuraportti 2006, 16–18.

¹⁵¹ Shlyamin 2004; CBER Report 1996, 6.

¹⁵² Mintec 1995, 3.

regional centres.¹⁵³ The cooperation that had started in the early 1990s ranged from the definition of priority investment projects and the gathering of information on the current state of infrastructure and major freight and passenger flows to the organization of ‘road caravans’ along the ‘Northern corridor’ from Oulu to the Komi region in Russia. Within this framework the Russian regions had signed several bilateral cooperation agreements on the development of transport connections in the ‘Northwest-Urals’ direction.¹⁵⁴

Both in the Russian domestic discussion and in the wider trans-regional framework, the reasoning for ‘the Northern/Archangelsk Corridor’ portrays it as a *growth corridor*. The development of transport and infrastructure was identified as a means of facilitating economic growth (for instance by lowering transportation costs and thus improving the competitiveness of the regional industry) and the improvement of living standards in the regions touched by the ‘corridor’. In the regional development programmes it was envisioned that a corridor between Finland/Norway and the Ural region would be completed by 2030.¹⁵⁵

Prior to the third Pan-European transport conference in Helsinki in 1997, the Finnish, Russian, Swedish and Norwegian transport authorities had drafted a proposal for a new priority corridor, the ‘Barents Euro-Arctic Transport Corridor’. The initiative was accepted in principle although the word ‘corridor’ was replaced with the more diffuse notion of ‘area’. In this new form it became one of the four ‘Pan-European Transport Areas’ established at Helsinki in 1997. This new initiative brought together several regional corridor projects devised during the 1990s. The wording ‘Barents Euro-Arctic’ is a semantic trace that leads us to yet another agentive context: the ‘Barents Euro-Arctic Region’.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ Tielaitos et al. 2000, 5, 71–79; Mintec 1995. See also Pynnöniemi 2000. For other regional projects see e.g. The Murmansk Corridor 1996; Mintec 1993; Finnish National Road Association 1992; Viatek 1996.

¹⁵⁴ Later the lobbying for the new link in Finland was organized in the framework of the Northlink project (2002–2004). The project has been marketing the new link to Finnish and foreign business, and was involved in establishing a Finnish-Russian logistics working group that started its work in February 2003. Later another Interreg IIIA project called ‘The Archangel Corridor’ morphed into Via Vartius Ltd. It focuses on the development of logistical services for Russian import/export trade through Finland. In November 2006 the Oulu region and the Republic of Karelia signed a bilateral cooperation agreement for the years 2007–2008, where special emphasis was placed on the development of the ‘transport corridor’ and especially the Vartius–Kivijärvi (rail) and Vartiua–Lyttä (road) checkpoints. Kainuun Venäjä-liiketoiminnan strategia 2005; NoWe-Rail 1994; Northlink 2004; Mintec 1995; Tielaitos et al. 2000; see also Pynnöniemi 2000; Avtomobil’nye Dorogi 4.4.1998; Press Service of the Head of the Republic of Karelia 30.11.2006.

¹⁵⁵ Tielaitos et al. 2000, 62; Shlyamin 2001a, 58.

¹⁵⁶ Barents Euro-Arctic Corridor 1997; Barents Euro-Arctic Transport Area 1998; Barentsin Käytävä 1995.

The Barents Euro-Arctic Region by definition includes the northern regions of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Northwest Russia. In this framework, transport was one of the principal spheres of cooperation. The 'common interest' in this sphere was articulated in a ministerial meeting held in Archangelsk during the Russian chairmanship in September 1996. The joint statement called for the "integration and creation of an efficient transport system" in the Barents Region. The development of the transport infrastructure connections in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region was recognized as being part of the "development of Pan-European cooperation in the field of transport" aiming for "greater integration into the Pan-European transport system". The process of integration referred in particular to the "opening up of access to the national transport markets" that was to proceed on "a reciprocal and mutually beneficial basis" and to the "gradual optimization of the border-crossing procedure for passengers and cargo". In the declaration of interest in the development of transport it was also stated that "the transport should be developed in accordance with national interests and the principles of the market economy".¹⁵⁷ The last principle was a source of friction when the declaration of "common interest" reached the stage of implementation.

The formal institutional framework for cooperation within the Barents Euro-Arctic Transport Area was created in May 1998 when the participants signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the development of the 'Area'.¹⁵⁸ The establishment of BEATA created an administrative-conceptual assemblage between the cooperation within the Barents Euro-Arctic Region framework and that of the Pan-European transport policy. In practice, it was a very convenient arrangement as the Steering committee of 'Corridor IX' consisted largely of the same authorities that comprised the locus of the BEATA cooperation. However, access to the meetings of the BEATA Steering committee by the regional authorities was by invitation only, thus signalling a shift in cooperation from the regional to the inter-governmental level.¹⁵⁹ But a question remained: Would the new assemblage provide a workable mechanism for the actualization of priority projects ranging from the development of the Northern Passage to the completion

¹⁵⁷ Archangelsk Statement; Barents Euro-Arctic Corridor 1997, 4.

¹⁵⁸ Memorandum 1998a.

¹⁵⁹ The chairmanship of the BEATA steering committee rotated between Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. The representatives of the respective governments (transport authorities) were authorized members of the steering committee whereas "representatives of local administrative bodies, non-governmental organizations, international financing institutions, private sector and other representatives" were named as possible invitees. The Finnish Ministry of Transport established a permanent secretariat to assist the steering committee.

of the new track from Kotchkoma to the Murmansk railway and a new bridge at Kotlas? In effect, the creation of a new 'transport area' signalled, at least in principle, a more comprehensive approach to the infrastructure modernization in Northwest Russia. The work carried out at this juncture resembled that done in the TINA framework and consisted of identifying a 'backbone network' for the 'Barents Euro-Arctic Transport Area'.¹⁶⁰

The major obstacle to the elaboration of a common understanding about policy priorities within the 'BEATA' framework was that the priority projects were drawn from diverse, often mutually contradictory presumptions concerning economic growth in a particular region or the projected growth of transit and general traffic flow in the region as a whole.¹⁶¹ In this respect, the major shift in the Russian part of the region related to the actual disappearance of the inter-regional associations from the policy-making field, and the appearance of a new agentive context: the federal districts in March 2000.

The North West Association was one of the eight regional associations established in Russia at the beginning of the 1990s, based on the former Gosplan regional structure. The association included the republics of Karelia and Komi, the Nenets autonomous district, Vologda, Kaliningrad, Leningrad, Archangelsk, Murmansk, Novgorod and the Pskov regions, and the city of St. Petersburg. Among the other ten regional associations a 'co-operation agreement' was signed in 1994 with the Russian Parliament that established the 'Association' as a participant in federal and regional politics. According to the agreement, associations had the right to review draft laws regulating the life of the regions before they were considered by the Federal Assembly. Also, the associations had the right to participate in devising the development strategies of the major economic sectors.¹⁶²

After the creation of seven federal districts in March 2000, the inter-regional associations gradually disappeared from the federal policy agenda. Yet in 2001, propositions for strengthening the role of the Association, as well as that of the District, were voiced by the regional agencies. In the transport sphere, the new cooperation framework between the regions and the centre was formalized in April 2003. The Ministry of Transport signed an agreement with the Northwest

¹⁶⁰ This information is stored in the BEATA GIS database developed under the supervision of the BEATA Steering Committee. Miettinen 2002; Declaration 2000a; Memorandum 2000; Memorandum 2001; Memorandum 1998b.

¹⁶¹ Miettinen 2002; Shlyamin 2001b.

¹⁶² One of the main objectives of the TACIS North-West Regional Transport Development project (1997–1999) was to establish "a technical unit coordinating the transport process in the North-West region of Russia within the North West Association". TACIS 1998; Lyashevskaya 1995, 275–283.

Federal District to cooperate in realizing the state transport policy in the region.¹⁶³ The agreement formalized a shift – already envisioned in the formulation of the federal transport policy of 2000 – in the primary agentive context of transport policy from associations to the federal districts at the regional level.¹⁶⁴ What was thus encountered was a certain diffusion of the agentive context in the development of the Archangelsk Corridor. From the very beginning it was trans-regional in character, both in the form of cooperation (the Finnish-Russian joint ventures) and the content (Russian exports to Finland and transit through the northern ports of Finland).

In the Russian context, the Barents Euro-Arctic Transport Area corridor stretching “from Norway to the Urals” was represented as something “gigantic”. An extract from the report on a meeting between the Minister of Transport of the RF, Igor Levitin, and the Prime Minister of the Republic of Karelia, Pavel Chernov, in October 2004 illuminates what is meant by “gigantic” in this context:

The main subject under discussion at the meeting was the question of the completion and start-up of the Ledmozero-Kochkoma railway which leads to the state border in the north of Karelia. It may become in the long term (*in perspective*) a part of the huge railway corridor from Norway up to the Ural Mountains and this project is already being discussed by the countries of the Barents region. The minister has stated that the completion of the route is expected to involve foreign investors from Finland, Sweden and Norway.¹⁶⁵

In the present-day Russian context, the Barents Link has replaced the discussion on the Archangelsk Corridor or the Barents Euro-Arctic Transport Area. In the documentation establishing the Transport Dialogue between Russia and the European Union, the Barents Link is mentioned as one of the priority projects of the Russian Federation. In the public discussion, it is identified as that “huge thing” which includes the construction of the missing sections both in the Republic of Karelia and in the Komi Republic.¹⁶⁶ In this respect, the pattern of

¹⁶³ One of the tasks envisioned in the Memorandum was the formulation of a strategy for the development of the transport complex of Northwest Russia until 2015. Memorandum 2003.

¹⁶⁴ Mintrans 2001b; Tsentri Severo-Zapad 2003; Nikitin 2001; Shlyamin 2001b. See also the Centre for Strategic Research 2001.

¹⁶⁵ IA Karelinform 22.10.2004

¹⁶⁶ Avetisyan 2007. The building of a railway link between Karpogory and Vendiga in the Komi Republic (the so-called Belkomur railway) started in 1996 with the establishment of a private company called Belkomur. The prime mover of the project has been the Komi Republic, which owns a majority share in the company. The project has received occasional federal funding, but came to a standstill in 2002 due to lack of funds. In August 2006,

reasoning is familiar from the Soviet discourse on industrialization where such ‘huge things’, or ‘gigantic’ projects had their very special place in the public discussion – denoting a beautiful but elusive future.

19.2.3 ‘The strategic link’

Since the mid-1990s when the building of the Ledmozero-Kotchkoma railway first surfaced in the public discussion, the situational context of the project has changed significantly. In the early 1990s, the railway volumes went down, while the prices went up. In the Republic of Karelia, the 50 per cent decrease in freight traffic was experienced on all the railway lines, excluding the Murmansk railway.¹⁶⁷ More recently, freight turnover has increased steadily, and Russian officials are concerned at the moment because the current bulk freight capacity of the Russian ports in the Gulf of Finland is inadequate. One solution is to develop the port facilities in the Murmansk region, and in this regard the code word is the ‘Barents Link’.

The argumentation for the development of connections to Russian ports resembles the line of reasoning presented over a hundred years ago when the idea of a railway link from the city of Oulu to the coast of the Barents Sea was first introduced. The father of the idea was the governor of Oulu, Georg von Alfthan, who suggested the building of a new railway line in the 1860s. Twenty years later, the issue became topical in Russia when the Russian Minister of Railways, Sergei Witte, seized upon this initiative. In 1892 he suggested building a railway from Oulu to the port of Kemi on the coast of the White Sea. The Finnish Senate rejected the proposition on the grounds that it would become far too expensive for the Grand Duchy. It was also noted that the advocates of the idea overestimated the strategic importance of the new route for the state as a whole. The Finns were eager to downplay the Russian response which they anticipated would follow the proposition. This is because the Russian nationalist newspapers saw the railway section as a threat and argued that it would give Sweden free access to the Russian border. Witte’s proposition was also rejected on the grounds that the new railway should be built to the Russian ports. Instead of a west-east-oriented transport connection, a special commission was established in 1894 to study the building of a railway link from St. Petersburg to the north, to the port of Vladimir (currently

the presidential plenipotentiary of the Volga federal district, Aleksandr Kononov, came forward with a promise of federal funding for the project. Pietarin liikenneviesti 2006, 33.

¹⁶⁷ Lausala and Valkonen 1999, 132.

Murmansk). The railway, which came to be known as the Murmansk Railway, was completed in 20 months between March 1915 and November 1916.¹⁶⁸

The latest phase in the Ledmozero-Kotchkoma railway project got underway in 2004 when the Karelian government signed a cooperation agreement with October Railways. According to the agreement, October Railways would repay the outstanding tax arrears (90 million roubles) to the Republican budget and, in return, the government would agree to target at least 50 per cent of this sum and other tax revenues at the jointly agreed railway investment programme. Speaking at the international investment seminar in St. Petersburg in 2001, a representative of October Railways, V.L. Belozerov, singled out the agreement as the 'economic mechanism' for financing the regionally important railway infrastructure projects.¹⁶⁹ Completion of the Ledmozero-Kotchkoma railway was among the prioritized projects. The electrification of the Idel'-Svir' section was, however, the top priority since it was considered strategically important for the development of the forest industry, which makes up the most significant economic sector of the Republic.¹⁷⁰

The Karelian Okatysh Company is currently the main user of the new railway section and the company has on several occasions during the last two years expressed its interest in participating in the financing of the electrification of the new track, and the building and reconstruction of railway stations, including the Kivijärvi station near the Finnish-Russian border.¹⁷¹ The completion of the construction would result in a new route for the company's freight shipments – eastern-bound traffic to domestic markets and exports via the ports of Murmansk and Arkhangelsk, as well as western-bound traffic to and through Finland. The company plans to start shipments of ore and other metals to the Magnitogorsk metallurgical plant in 2006, and by 2010 it also plans to increase the annual volume of shipments to 11 million tons – 8 million to domestic markets and 3 million to exports.¹⁷² Thus, the expected growth in freight volumes makes the completion of a new link timely.

¹⁶⁸ Reconstruction of the railway started immediately after the civil war. The downside of the fast pace of construction was the technically poor condition of the track. The decision about building a second parallel track was made in February 1940. Juntunen 1997, 52.

¹⁶⁹ See Solanko 2006 for discussion on a similar type of public-private partnership in the context of district heating installations.

¹⁷⁰ Belozerov 2001, 67–68; Kareliya 14.10.2004; Gudok 28.4.2004.

¹⁷¹ Kareliya 28.2.2004; Gudok 9.11.2005; Transport Rossii 29.3.2004; Gudok 29.1.2005; Kur'er Karelia 14.6.2006.

¹⁷² The company was also planning to run 8–9 pairs of trains per day in the Finnish direction through the Kivijärvi station at the border instead of the current 5 pairs. Without the

Nevertheless, work required for the opening of commercial traffic on the section practically came to a standstill until late 2005. In June 2006 the October railways, the government of Karelia and the largest enterprises agreed on three 'strategic directions' of cooperation. These included measures aimed at facilitating the main freight flows, the establishment of joint mining enterprises and the development of border-crossing and customs points in the region. The common intention in the development of the Ledmozero–Kotchkoma section was expressed in a trilateral investment programme titled the 'development of the mining-industrial complex in southern Karelia'. The programme will be realized on the basis of a 'public-private partnership' (*gosudarstvenno-chastnogo partnerstva*), meaning that all three agencies involved will contribute financially to the completion of the route.¹⁷³

The regional viewpoint that is highlighted in the present discussion is largely marginalized in the federal discourse. The Ledmozero–Kotchkoma section is regarded as one of the "low-traffic railway lines"¹⁷⁴ (*malodeiatel'nyh zheleznodorozhnyh linii*) and its development is part of efforts to improve the coherence of the country, the united economic space and the united transport system (ETC), rather than the development of the 'international transport corridors'. In fact, the concept of MTK is not used at all in this context. The completion of the Ledmozero-Kotchkoma section and the electrification of the Kochkoma–Kivijärvi track are included in the list of prioritized projects of the Modernization of the Russian Transport System Federal Target Programme, but not among the prioritized projects of the 'international transport corridors'. Clearly, the section is not one of the main railway lines (criterion c1 of the definition of MTK in Russia) but it would fulfill another criteria stipulated by the MTK, namely it is one of the internationally agreed development corridors (in the Barents Region framework) and it has the potential to become an important transit route for international shipments.¹⁷⁵

reconstruction of the Kivijärvi station, the section from Kostamuksha to the border is expected to become a 'bottle-neck' hampering the freight traffic. IA Karelinform 14.11.2005; IA Karelinform 26.10.2006; Oktyabr'skaya Magistral' 19.8.2006; Gudok 13.10.2006.

¹⁷³ Oktyabr'skaya Magistral' 17.03.2005; Oktyabr'skaya Magistral' 16.10.2004; IA Karelinform 18.2.2004; Gudok 13.10.2006.

¹⁷⁴ By definition, these include the Suojärvi–Ledmozero and Ledmozero–Kochkoma sections that comprise 25 per cent of the whole length of the Karelian railways but only 5 per cent of the total freight volume. Kur'er' Karelii 14.6.2006.

¹⁷⁵ In the new transport strategy up to 2020 that was accepted by the government of Russia in May 2005, the development of transit corridors that "supplement" the main international transport corridors in Russia is among the envisioned tasks of the joint federal-region cooperation. Mintrans 2005a, 33; Mintrans 2001b, 62; Tsentr Severo-Zapad 2003, 131.

Even if the Ledmozero–Kotchkoma railway is rarely mentioned in the federal documents on the ‘international transport corridors’, the use of the notion of “strategic direction” (*strategichesk napravlenie*) denotes that it is recognized among the routes that serve Russian *export* shipments primarily through the ports of Murmansk and Archangelsk, but also through the northern ports in Finland. The vision of the Northern Corridor as a transit passage for shipments running from the Asia Pacific region through the northern parts of Russia to Finland is articulated as a “gigantic” project.¹⁷⁶ Whereas the Northern Corridor was a key word linking the project to the Barents Region regional cooperation framework, the notion of “strategic direction” is used as a code word in the administrative market to bargain for the budget and the private investments required for the completion of the new route. The compatibility of these two different lines of reasoning, the strategic link and the Northern Corridor, is brought to the fore in the framework of the reconstruction of the Kivijärvi railway station at the Finnish-Russian border.

In July 2006 the regional agencies¹⁷⁷ agreed on the joint actions to facilitate the customs and border-crossing procedures, including reconstructing the necessary infrastructure at the Kivijärvi border-crossing point.¹⁷⁸ According to the deputy plenipotentiary of the Northwestern federal district, L. Sovershaieva, the agreement was the first of its kind in Russia and it provided a good example of cooperation between the state administration and business. The opening hours of the border-crossing point were to be increased by four hours, allowing six pairs of trains to run per day instead of five. Later, the representative of the Federal Railway Transport Agency (SZTU FAzhT) characterized these measures as “cosmetic” rather than comprehensive. The head of October Railways, Viktor Stepov, speaking at the joint Finnish–Russian seminar “Innovation – Strategy – Cooperation” argued that the “complex solution to transport and border-crossing questions” required federal-level actions. The development of border-crossing stations such as Kivijärvi should proceed in accordance with the federal budget

¹⁷⁶ Shlyamin 2001; IA Karelinform 26.10.2006; Kareliya 14.10.2004; IA Karelinform 22.10.2004; PRAIM-TASS 5.10.2004; Kareliya 20.3.2004; Kur'er Karelii 14.6.2006; Gudok 20.6.2006; IA Karelinform 11.3.2004; Gudok 29.1.2005.

¹⁷⁷ Parties to the agreement included the government of Karelia, October Railways, Karelian Okatysh, RVD Service, and the Kostamuksha Customs. Karjalan tasavallan lehdistöpalvelu 11.7.2006; Gudok 13.10.2006.

¹⁷⁸ The Kivijärvi border-crossing point is mentioned among the Russian border-crossing points in an instruction where the Ministry of Railways and the State Customs Committee agree on measures intended to facilitate trans-shipments along the Trans-Siberian Railway in August 1997. The State Customs Committee of the RF 1997.

and objectives of the State border of the Russian Federation until 2010 federal target programme. At best, the federal involvement would garner extra funding for the completion of the reconstruction, and at worst, prolong the start of the work. A bit later, *Gudok* wrote that the Russian Railways was not going to earmark investments for the Ledmozero-Kotchkoma project before 2009.¹⁷⁹

While the implementation of the projected reconstruction of the Ledmozero–Kotchkoma track and the related infrastructure was pushed forward by the joint agreements between the major shareholders in Russia (the railways, the government of the Karelian Republic and the Karelian Okatysh company), uncertainty over the actual completion of the work and the opening of the track to “commercial traffic” was not allayed. At the same time, the electrification of the railway sections from the Russian border (Vartius) to Oulu and Kontiomäki and between Kontiomäki and Iisalmi were completed in late November 2006, thus signalling the continued Finnish interest in the route.¹⁸⁰ Even if the commercial usage of the new track is still hampered, the Archangelsk Corridor was successful in bringing the project, first introduced over 140 years ago, into the foreground of public discussion in Russia as well as in the larger context of the Barents Region cooperation.

In the Russian federal agentive context, the railway track was not identified as a ‘missing’ one. It was not viewed primarily as a part of the ‘Archangelsk Corridor’ whereby the railway between Ledmozero and Kotchkoma would count as a ‘missing link’ in the transport chain between Finland (the Oulu region) and Russia (Karelia and Komi regions). Instead, the railway project was dubbed a “strategic project” whereby the focus shifted from the regional to the federal agentive level. In this framework, the development of communications linkages providing for the redirection of cargo flows to the foreign ports was of secondary importance, if not rejected completely.

¹⁷⁹ *Gudok* 13.10.2006; *Kur'er Karelii* 17.10.2006; *Karjalan Tasavallan lehdistöpalvelu* 11.7.2006.

¹⁸⁰ *Ratahallintokeskus* 30.11. 2006.

VI

The Assembly: Playing the Semantic Games



An advertisement at the Novyi Arbat street, Moscow, Russia, September 2007. Photograph by the author.

20 Semantic games and the logic of playing

20.1 Resemblances between games

This research has been about the rebuilding of the Russian polity and the futures that are inscribed in the way the building process unfolds. The reasoning of the Russian policy on ‘pan-European corridors’ is one instance at which this rebuilding actualizes. In the final analysis, this study is geared towards reconstructing the sense in which the transport corridors are orderly. That is, what are the purposes and goals that the agencies involved attach to the creation and maintenance of the corridor-like arrangements. Analytically, I have approached this question by identifying the semantic games whereby what can be described as belonging to the ‘foreground’, and what comprises the ‘background’ of the Russian policy on international transport corridors, is nested into an ‘assembly’: an agentic context in which the corridors are institutional facts. Expressed in Searlean terminology, the institutional facts are systems of constitutive rules which, in a self-referential fashion, establish the institution. Playing a game of ‘chess’, or ‘buying’ a ‘private property’, or ‘winning’ a game of ‘football’ are examples of the imposition of a new status function ‘X counts as Y’ in the agentic context C which, when collectively and continuously agreed, is an instance of the construction of institutional reality.

In turn, Wittgenstein’s original idea of the language game draws attention to the dynamics and logic of playing with language. To put it somewhat bluntly, Searle focuses on the mechanism of construction of the system of rules constitutive of the particular game (such as chess). Whereas, following Wittgenstein’s conceptualization, the emphasis shifts to the family-resemblances between the games. My application of Roger Caillois’ conceptualization of different game forms (competition (*agon*), chance (*alea*), simulation (*mimicry*) and vertigo (*ilinx*)) will help in distinguishing the ‘resemblances’ between different semantic games, each a constituent part of the institutionalization of the ‘international transport corridor’ as a domain of politics in Russia.

As I noted at the beginning of this study, the development of three ‘pan-European transport corridors’ on the territory of Russia is a conjunction point of three simultaneous processes: the integration of Russia into the global markets, the reorganization of the Russian polity, and the fragmentation of the post-Soviet space. I may now add to this that each context can be reconstructed as a pair of

semantic games: the games of competition and simulation, the games of chance and competition, and finally, the games of simulation and vertigo. I would again like to emphasize that these pairs are not intended as a strict typology. Rather, identifying the different semantic games helps in reconstructing the logic of playing with the ‘semantic currency’ of the corridor in the context of Russian politics.

The emphasis on *looking at* the ‘resemblances’ between the games is expressed with the visualization of the puzzle of Russian transport corridors. It indicates how we may come to know about the logic of playing the game and the constitutive rules of those games. The picture puzzle consisting of the foreground and the background represents two different approaches, or strategies pursued in responding to the challenge of extending three ‘Pan-European transport corridors’ into the territory of Russia.

In the ‘foreground’, Russia is seen as a bridge between Asia and Europe. The picturing of the puzzle in this way reiterates the Eurasianist and classical geopolitical understanding of ‘Russia–Eurasia’. But it also allows us to look at Russia as one of the major global transport routes. Contrary to Eurasian thinking, in this respect Russia is not envisioned as something exceptional, quite the contrary, her aspiration to be ‘similar to’ other transit hubs found elsewhere on the globe, is emphasized. The starting point for discussion, and what provides a link to the ‘background’, is the acknowledgement that this picture has not yet been realized. To make it actual, the Russian government has devised, and is currently implementing a policy on *Russian international transport corridors*.

In the following section, I will analyse the ‘nesting’ of the foreground and the background into a new arrangement: the assembly. Different game forms – optimization, coordination and rebuilding capture the different semantic logics of the consolidation of the ‘assembly’. Figure 3 below depicts how the games are combined.

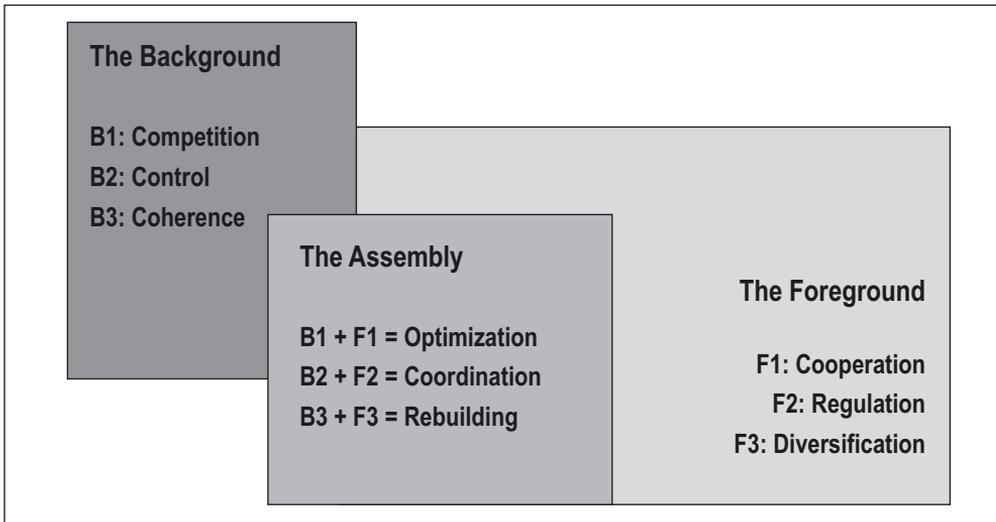


Figure 3. The assembly of the research results.

It should be emphasized that the identified games are interpretations that I have arrived at through my reconstruction of reasoning on the development of Russian ‘international transport corridors’.¹ In the next chapter I will briefly introduce Caillois’ conceptualization of different game forms. The distinction between two notions of competition, *konkurencsiya* and *sorevnovaniya*, exemplifies how I will apply this conceptual framework in my study, and it also illuminates the relevance of this approach to the study of contemporary Russian politics.

20.2 Application of Caillois’ definition of game forms

The notion of competition is central to an understanding of the evolving Russian discussion on the transport corridors and foreign (economic) relations as a whole. Competition is about global rivalry (*bor’be*) over resources (human, natural and capital) but it is also about ‘competitiveness’ which, according to the World Economic Forum definition, is the ability of a country to achieve sustained high rates of growth in GDP per capita.² Thirdly, competition may take the form of ‘cooperation’, where the world of competition is understood more like a challenge

¹ Caillois suggested that his study not only established a sociology of games, but laid the foundation for a sociology *derived from* games. Caillois 1961, 67.

² The report is cited in the Annual Competitiveness report by the National Competitiveness Council (Ireland). The latter report also makes note of the OECD definition where “com-

rather than a zero-sum game. In his address to the Federal Council in 2002, Putin stated that:

Yes, the period of confrontation has ended. We are building constructive, normal relations with all the world's nations – I want to emphasize, with all the world's nations. However, I want to note something else: the norm in the international community, in the world today, is also harsh *competition* – for markets, for investments, for political and economic influence. And in this fight, Russia needs to be strong and *competitive*.³

Russia's inferior position in terms of global competition is due to its internal weaknesses, explained Putin. "No one intends to be hostile towards us – no one wants this or needs it", Putin noted, and continued: "But no one is actually waiting for us either. No one is going to go out of their way to help us. We need to fight for a place in the "economic sun" ourselves".⁴ The term competition is also one of the central lines of thinking in the doctrine on Sovereign democracy.⁵ The meaning of competition in this context has certain implications for Soviet discursive practices, although in its current usage, the notion of competition is not compatible with those practices that prevailed during the Soviet era.

A point of departure is to acknowledge that in the Soviet language use "conceptually close ideas were given totally different verbal expressions".⁶ For example, the word competition was expressed in two distinct ways. The generally accepted, politically correct way was to use the word *sorevnovanie*, whereas in the context of speaking about competition in the capitalist system and between the capitalist and socialist camps, the term *konkurenciya* was used instead.⁷ The distinction was compatible with the central thesis of the Soviet-style economic development formulated by Lenin. The task was not just to bring about economic development in general but "to catch up and surpass the capitalist countries economically".⁸ Subsequently, the discussion focused on the actual speed at which the policy of "catching up" and "surpassing" was to be achieved. The underlying

petitiveness is the degree to which a nation can, under free trade and fair market conditions, produce goods and services which meet the test of international markets". NCC 2001.

³ Putin 2002. Emphasis added.

⁴ Putin 2002. Cf. Putin 2001; Putin 2003; Putin 2004; Putin 2005; Putin 2006; Putin 2007.

⁵ Ryabov 2005; Garadzha 2006; Surkov 2006; Lukyanov 2007.

⁶ Eronen 1982, 176.

⁷ Eronen 1982, 176–177; Susiluoto 1990, 79. Cf. BTC 2001, 1238; Wilczynski 1981, 110; Rummyantseva 1984.

⁸ Davies 2006, 72. On Marx's conception of time and its implementation in the design of Soviet institutions, see Hanson 1997.

assumption was that competition in this case was a zero-sum situation. It was about the “struggle” and “rivalry” between the two opposing economic systems and between capitalists in an inherently unstable, insecure capitalist economy.⁹

Conversely, the term *sorevnovanie* denoted an upright, positive-sum Socialist competition. In the Sixteenth Party Conference in 1930 a formal appeal was made to develop Socialist competition. In the drive for the rapid industrialization of the country, Socialist competition was established as the social practice of competition over the fulfilment of the Plan between the work collectives and brigades. Competition was organized in the form of public challenges, for example in the sphere of road building.¹⁰ It was hoped that the practice would foster and reinforce a sense of collectivity between the workers and also increase efficiency in fulfilment of the Plan.¹¹

Even if the boundaries between different game forms are not always strictly distinguishable and, in effect, competition and simulation are compatible rather than contradictory versions of the games, each game has its ever-present rules that govern the correct playing of the game. Competition understood in the sense of *sorevnovanie* is a game of simulation (*mimicry*). It is a game of mutual challenges that presupposes the creation of an imaginary universe of ‘competitors’. Playing in accordance with this game requires *imitation* and thus “becoming an illusory character oneself, and behaving like one”.¹² The main difference between competitive games and those of simulation is that in the previous case those playing the game do not mimic, but their spectators do. Competition (*agon*) is a form of rivalry, the purpose of which is to search for equality through the process of competing. In playing a game, say football, the equality of chances is artificially created by the rules of the game, whereas in rivalry, for example over transit transport, the equality is sought through participation in the game

⁹ Wilczynski 1981, 110; Bottomore 1983, 90–92; see also Harvey 1990, 106–107 on competition in Marx’s economic theory. In a study on the differences between tactics and practices of the US and Soviet negotiators, their relationship was characterized as a “long-term competitive relationship”. Sloss 1986, 156.

¹⁰ Kharkhordin 1999, 83–84; Kotkin 1997, 91–92; Autio 2002, 149–150.

¹¹ Often, as for example in the case of the Magnitogorsk Dam, finished with fanfares in a “record” time of just 74 days, the actual structure was unusable and repairs had to begin the moment it was completed. Kharkhordin 1999, 83–84; Kotkin 1997, 91–92; Autio 2002, 149–150. For problems related to Soviet economics and industrial planning see e.g. Conyngham 1982; Sutela 1984; Blackwell 1994.

¹² Currently, the term *sorevnovaniya* is commonly used for example in reference to sports, competing schools of thought about Russia’s economic reforms, and competition between the city of St. Petersburg and the City of Moscow. In everyday speech it has also evolved into its complete opposite, denoting the winner in rivalry over a girl. *Ekonomika i Zhsin’* 25.8.2000; *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* 8.6.2000; Caillois 1961, 19.

of competing.¹³ In the game of simulation, on the other hand, players themselves share a common intention of make-believe, of the suspension of reality.¹⁴

However, the boundary between game and no-game is stricter. “If the cheat violates the rules, he at least pretends to respect them”, writes Caillois. It is not the cheat’s dishonesty that destroys the game. The game “is ruined by the nihilist who denounces the rules as absurd and conventional, who refuses to play because the game is meaningless”. This is an irrefutable argument because the game has no meaning but the intrinsic one, and “that is why its rules are imperative and absolute, beyond discussion”.¹⁵ This points, although in a different way from that which was discussed in the previous chapters, to the self-referentiality of institutional reality. In the following three chapters I will elaborate on the three pairs of semantic games reconstructed in the empirical research analysis.

20.3 The three pairs of semantic games

20.3.1 *The games of competition*

In the first instance, the development of the ‘international transport corridors’ is a game of competition fought in the sphere of geo-economics and geopolitics. It is an answer to the question of whether Russia will become a ‘bridge’ between Europe and Asia, or the ‘dead-end’ of Eurasia. Opposing metaphors are used in the reasoning for *immediate* actions in the sphere of transport and infrastructure modernization. The concrete plan of action is inscribed in the concept of the international transport corridor.¹⁶ The semantic game of competition has two aspects: competition in the sense of *konkurencsiya* (here ‘competition’) and cooperation in the sense of *sorevnovaniya* (here ‘cooperation’). The pair of complementary and mutually supportive games are summarized in Table 1.

The positive vision of the ‘bridge’ and its negative counterpart, the ‘dead-end’, mirrors the traditional way of positioning Russia between Europe and Asia. In the game of competition (*konkurencsiya*) the ‘international transport corridors’

¹³ Caillois 1961, 67.

¹⁴ Caillois 1961, 23. This discussion goes back to Aristotle and the notion of *mimesis*, which consists of imitating *natura naturata* (created nature; nature as it was) and *naturata naturans* (nature as creator; nature as it might become). Ackerman 2002, 126; Huizinga 1984. On critics of the prevalence of the mimetic approach to the study of IR, see Bleiker 2001.

¹⁵ Caillois 1961, 7.

¹⁶ See e.g. Mintrans 2001b; Frank 2000.

are considered as a means of ‘fighting for’ the transit flows rerouted through the Russian territory. Success in this game is counted as an instance of the international recognition of Russia as a great Eurasian (transport) power (*derzhava*).¹⁷ In actual fact, however, a mere one per cent of the trade flows between Asia and Europe runs through Russia at present. What is more, a substantial proportion of Russian imports (originating from Asia) are carried via distribution centres in Europe to Russia. Set against this background, the ‘pan-European transport corridor’ concept is understood as a synonym for the metaphor of the ‘dead-end’. Thus, instead of using a term that carries a negative connotation in the Russian discursive context, it is merged with the concept of ‘international transport corridor’.

Therefore, although conceptually the move from ‘pan-European’ to ‘international’ transport corridors is a parallel move, in practical terms it is a way of distancing Russia from the discursive context of the ‘pan-European corridor’ policy. Thus, the simplest answer to the question posed at the beginning of the research, namely what will happen to the ‘pan-European corridors’ when they are extended to Russia, is to say that nothing will happen. In the context of Russian politics, the ‘pan-European corridor’ notion is a figure of speech rather than an agentive context for doing things.

In the Russian discursive context, the development of the corridors is rarely addressed in terms of ‘integration’, although integration of the Russian and European transport infrastructures is considered ‘inevitable’.¹⁸ The conceptualization of the corridors as ‘international’ in the Russian discursive context reinforces rather than challenges the strict contours between the local, state and global domains of politics. It marks a step away from the diffuse ‘pan-European’ space and its terms of integration. This is clearly expressed in the context of discussing the ‘Russian transit’ to Europe through the former Soviet Union countries or other neighbouring countries. In practice, the bulk of Russian transit consists of crude oil and oil products and natural gas transported via pipelines or carried by sea or rail transport to Europe. With reference to Russian foreign trade, the concept of ‘international transport corridor’ is used in arguing for the preservation of Russia’s independence from the other countries, rather than interdependency and integration. This policy objective has been actualized in the building of the new port complexes in the Gulf of Finland (oil terminals and later also container terminals).

¹⁷ Mintrans 2001b; Government of the RF 2000a; Frank 2000.

¹⁸ See chapter 13.

More recently, the Russian policy on ‘international transport corridors’ has become more outward-oriented (*vis-à-vis* the post-Soviet space in particular). This was illustrated in 2005 when the ‘international transport corridor’ sub-programme was renamed the ‘Export of Transport Services’ sub-programme.¹⁹ It outlines the actions required to ‘capitalize’ on Russia’s geographical position. In Russia’s relations with the EU, the shift is couched in the term Transport Diplomacy, which is a concept that runs parallel to the term Transport Dialogue used in the context of EU-Russia cooperation on transport. I will return to this point in the final chapter.

However, the game of competition (*konkurencsiya*) has a more ‘cooperative’ variant. In this latter sense, competition is understood as a challenge (*sorevnovaniya*). In the game of ‘cooperation’, the emphasis shifts from a primarily geopolitical to a more diffuse, temporal understanding of distance. In this sense, the development of ‘international transport corridors’ on the territory of the Russian Federation is identified in terms of the quality of the transport services offered including, for example, the punctuality of the service, the use of the latest IT transport applications (at the logistical centres), and other practices that require harmonization of the current Russian legislation with the European and international norms and regulations. In this context, the ‘corridor’ is the “space of flows”²⁰: an *interface* between the internal and external domains of politics and between technology and politics. In both of these senses, the ‘international transport corridor’ correlates with the concept of the ‘pan-European corridor’.

In a trivial sense, both terms convey a reference to ‘optimization’. In a general sense it refers to the challenge globalization poses to the sovereign territoriality/regional integrity. In the context of ‘Pan-European corridors’, the idea of ‘optimization’ is expressed in the proposal to carry out studies on the evolution of the transport flows within the range of a particular ‘corridor’ or ‘transport area’.²¹ In the context of the discussion about Russian ‘international transport corridors’, on the other hand, ‘optimization’ refers to the balancing between the private investors, international financial institutions and the Russian state agency in the planning and carrying out of the major infrastructure projects on the territory of Russia. The elaboration of the ‘international transport corridor’ concept is a practical application of the objective to acquire foreign investments for Russian

¹⁹ Mintrans 2005c; Government of the RF 2006b.

²⁰ Castells 1996.

²¹ See chapter 11 in this study.

infrastructure projects.²² Even though the EBRD and the World Bank have been involved in financing the prioritized transport infrastructure projects, the bulk of the financing comes from the Russian state budget. Consequently, the majority of the discussions on the corridors have focused on the question of how to fight, not just against international competitors but against the departmentalism characteristic of the Russian state administration.

Table 1. The assembly of competition/cooperation

The final aspect	The “causal” aspect	The rational inference
B1: Competition (<i>konkurencsiya</i>)	Competition understood as a zero-sum game Reduction of Russia’s dependency on the infrastructures of the neighbouring countries Russia as a ‘bridge’	Prioritization of the development of the country’s own ports, redirection of the foreign trade and transit flows to the territory of Russia
F1: Cooperation (<i>sorevnovaniya</i>)	Competition understood as a challenge Improvement of the quality of the Russian transport system Russia as an ‘interface’	Formulation of the concept of MTK*
Assembly: Optimization	‘Capitalization’ on Russia’s geographical position between Europe and Asia Russia as a ‘great transport power’	MTK “North-South” and “East-West” “Export of transport services”

*MTK: International Transport Corridor

20.3.2 The games of chance

The Russian policy on the ‘corridors’ was to a large extent formulated as a response to the *external* challenges: globalization and the reordering of Europe. However, the notion of the ‘corridor’ carries with it an aspiration towards consolidation of the ‘vertical administration’ of the Russian polity. In the background of the formulation of the policy is an understanding of Russian politics in the 1990s as

²² The EBRD and the RF signed an agreement on June 2003 on a USD 290m loan for the reconstruction of the St. Petersburg by-pass and the road connection between Chita and Khabarovsk. Both projects were identified as part of the development of ‘international transport corridors’ in Russia. IA REGNUM 26.2.2003; PRAIM-TASS 1.7.2003.

a game of chance. Reference is then made to the regular, unexpected shifts in the policy and the mixing of the formal, informal and unwritten rules in the instance of policy-making.²³

In a positive sense, the markets represent a form of play where the games of chance and competition are combined. In the Russian discourse the reference to playing in accordance with the 'civilized rules' makes this connection. In practical terms, 'civilized rules' refer to the state agency as a combination of regulative institutions, for example, the mechanism of 'public-private partnership' in the financing of the large road infrastructure projects.²⁴ However, rational economic action in the context of Russian state policy is largely oriented towards securing the state interest in a particular economic sphere or under specific circumstances. The state interest, in turn, can be formulated in terms of economics but, as indicated on several occasions during this study, it is often a combination of economic and purely political ends. The control over 'strategic' state assets, in particular the territory, remains in the pervasive realm of the federal policy.

Competition in this latter sense translates into the 'struggle' over territory, resources, position and so forth, where there is very little room for *competitors*. This goes against the basic market principles whereby competitors are accepted as part of the game that is pursued to enhance one's *competitiveness*. Protectionism is one of the tactics in the game played in the markets, whereas disavowal of competition as such is not. From the viewpoint of the foreign investor, counting a particular project or even a branch of the economy as part of the 'strategic state interests' indicates a rising level of *risk*. The risk lies in the unpredictability that has to do with the lack of transparency at the policy-design level, as well as at the level of policy implementation.²⁵

Against this background, the policy on 'international transport corridors' is pursued to improve control over the policy-planning and implementation of the infrastructure development projects. What is addressed here is the background of the 'formal rules', that is, the informal and unwritten rules of the game of chance and competition. In the Russian discursive context, the nesting of the two games takes the form of the 'inter-departmental transport complexes' ("MTK").

²³ Caillois 1961, 73.

²⁴ The law on automobile roads accepted by the Council of the Federation on 26.10.2007 defines the mechanism of the public-private partnership and includes blueprints for the building of toll roads in Russia. Federal'niy Zakon 2007.

²⁵ The acceptance of the law on 'strategic industries' in September 2007 should therefore be seen in a positive light for it provides foreign and domestic investors with a formal map indicating in which branches of the economy the state interest and involvement is expected to be deep. Liuhto 2007; Hanson and Teague 2005; Gaddy 2007.

The notion of the “inter-departmental transport complexes” refers to the problem of departmentalism (administrative reform in current parlance), but also to the domination of the game of chance (presupposing a certain resignation of the will) in the administrative markets of Russian politics (see Table 2 below).

In the best possible scenario, the coordination of the implementation of the priority projects at the level of different ministries and state committees enhances the efficiency of the work of the agencies. However, these arrangements are often established under the ‘personal supervision’ of the president, whereby the semantic currency of “MTK” translates into a source of ‘razzmatazz’ in the instance of policy-making. The way in which the mechanism of ‘public-private partnership’, now inscribed into a law on automobile roads (see note 24 on the previous page), is implemented is an important benchmark in the trajectory of creating an ‘aggregate of institutions that make societies competitive’, as expressed by Dmitry Trenin.²⁶ Russia’s success in ‘transforming itself’ would require that the destructive elements present in the games of chance and competition are not given the upper hand in the task of improving the ‘coherence’ of the country and the ‘diversification’ of the Russian economy.

Table 2. The assembly of control/regulation

The final aspect	The “causal” aspect	The rational inference
B2: Control	The securing of the state interest in an instance of policy-making	Idea of “Strategic planning”
F2: Regulation	Transformation of the agentive context of the policy-planning and implementation	Implementation of the PPP mechanism
Assembly: Coordination	Completion of the priority projects	“MTK” **

** “MTK” The inter-departmental transport complex

20.3.3 *The games of simulation*

During recent years, transport and infrastructure development has acquired the status of topics to be mentioned by the president and other high-level state officials in their public appearances. The rise of transport from almost complete oblivion into the sphere of state strategic interests has been rapid, and it is likely to retain that status in the years to come. As noted in the previous chapters,

²⁶ Kommersant 25.5.2006.

the development of international transport corridors in Russia is considered in the context of the need to strengthen the coherence of the country and its international competitiveness. The notion of “transport great power” (*derzhava*), often used in this connection, carries with it a reference to the repositioning of Russia in the post-Soviet space. This general idea is expressed in the “strategic cooperation 1520” concept. The 1520 refers to the wide railway gauge in use in several countries bordering Russia.²⁷

The reasoning for the policy (see Table 3) is geared towards preservation of the *coherence* of the post-Soviet space and/or Russian political and economic space. Diversification is, in essence, understood here as the aspiration to improve the logistical services (such as logistics centres and terminals at the major ports) in Russia, as well as the improvement of the road connections between the regions and the major industrial centres. These objectives are clearly stated in the Russian transport strategy. However, the main emphasis is placed on *diversification* of the energy export routes in line with Russia’s energy strategy.

The development of ‘international transport corridors’ on the territory of Russia is part of the efforts to consolidate the power of the federal agencies over the regional and local administrations. At the same time, the conceptualization of the corridors is a currency used in the competition for scarce resources and power within the federal policy space. From the viewpoint of the regional agencies, it serves as a code word that denotes the commitment of the federal agencies to the *completion* of the prioritized projects.

The ‘assembly’ of the two lines of thinking can be summarized in the notion of *rebuilding*. It is understood here in the sense of the ‘putting in order’ (*obustroistvo*) of the existing set of infrastructures. In a minor sense, it denotes the ‘reconstruction’ of the infrastructures providing for the increase in the transit flows and the country’s most important foreign trade commodities. On the other hand, international competition in the sphere of transit transport between Europe and Asia compels Russia to ‘rearrange’ the existing administrative and other practices to provide for qualified services for international transport transportation. I have already made reference to this in the first pair of games.

The development of ‘international transport corridors’ in the latter sense does not denote *per se* the opening up of Russian markets to foreign competition. In the Russian discourse, the development of corridors refers, on the contrary, to the

²⁷ Today the broad gauge is used in the Baltic states, Ukraine, Belarus, the Caucasian and Central Asian republics, and Mongolia. The main railway networks of Spain and Portugal use a wider gauge than the standard one. See footnote on page 7.

forging of the Russian international gateway. The use of the term ‘international’ conveys the continued and reinforced emphasis on the sovereign territoriality and practices whereby it is upheld. The last pair of semantic games (‘coherence’ and ‘diversification’) is the game of simulation (*mimicry*).

The logic of playing the game is best described as a simulation of strength. This is the game of simulation and vertigo (*ilinx*) where simulation “consists of deliberate impersonation”, for example, in the form of cunning.²⁸ The main line of thinking is to consider the country at the top of the mountain. With its current rapid economic growth, Russia is capable of pursuing greater independence from others. The path along the mountain range is, to a large extent, comprised of railways and pipelines, even if the “roads of Russia” have a central place in the discourse about Russia’s competitiveness. However, the central position of the pipelines and railways is indicative of the asymmetry of Russia’s foreign economic trade pattern and the structure of the economy in general.

Table 3. The assembly of coherence/diversification

The final aspect	The “causal” aspect	The rational inference
B3: Coherence	Reconstruction of the existing transport and infrastructure system (ETC)	The building of the Chita-Khabarovsk road
F3: Diversification	Increase in the share of value-added products in Russian exports	The establishment of logistics centres, adoption of IT solutions in the transport sector
Assembly: Rebuilding	Improving existing connections serving Russian foreign trade and diversification of the energy export routes	The construction of new ports and the improvement of connections to the ports, as well as in the Asian direction “Strategic Cooperation 1520”

*** United Transport System (*Edinaya Transportnaya Sistema*, ETC)

²⁸ Caillois 1961, 78.

21 Conclusion: the possibilities of dialogue in Russia's relations with the EU

All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.²⁹

Nabokov's ironic misquotation of Tolstoy is, however, better suited to our purposes. As Nabokov puts it: "All happy families are more or less dissimilar; all unhappy ones more or less alike".³⁰ Both assertions point to the notion of family resemblances where there is no trait or set of traits which all "happy" or "unhappy" families have in common. The example is drawn from Searle's article where he identifies traits that distinguish the 'serious' (i.e. non-fictional) from the pretended representation of a state of affairs.³¹

Although Russia's relations with the EU are by no means fictional, Russia's European choice is often dubbed fictional discourse, a non-serious game of words. But, I would add, paraphrasing Searle, "serious (that is, non-fictional) speech acts can be conveyed by fictional texts, even though the conveyed speech act is not represented in the text".³² In other words, the semantic games inscribed in Russia's European choice are just that, games. Playing with the 'semantic currency' of the 'pan-European transport corridor' in the Russian context is a happy performative in the Nabokovian sense. Converting the 'pan-European' corridors into 'international' ones has led to different actions. Even if the two conceptualizations are dissimilar, they also have complementary features that provide grounds for continuing the dialogue.

In general, a dialogue is an activity which, in principle at least, is directed at the successful communication of meaning. The use of the same words helps in conveying meaning, but is not in itself sufficient, as successful communication requires a certain convergence of the semantic logic of using the words. The matter which most observers of EU–Russia relations would probably agree on is that the institutionalization of communication in the form of permanent 'partnership councils', 'dialogues' and 'road maps' has not resulted in the convergence of the policies pursued by the parties. By inventing the new term 'international transport

²⁹ The opening line of Leo Tolstoy's novel *Anna Karenina*. Cited in Searle 1975, 332; cf. Tolstoy 1991.

³⁰ Nabokov at the beginning of his novel *Invitation of a Bodyguard*. Cited in Searle 1975, 332; cf. Prozorov 2006b, 180.

³¹ Searle 1975, 320.

³² Searle 1975, 332.

corridor’, Russia has sought to ‘accommodate’ the vocabulary used in the EU context to fit more neatly into its internal and external policies. The question in the end is whether the evolution of the vocabularies in Russia and in the context of the EU policies on transport provide a basis for successful communication in the form of a dialogue on transport³³. Or is the ‘dialogue’ yet another example of the ‘proliferation of the fuzzy’³⁴ in EU–Russia relations?

In the light of the previous discussion on games, I would like to emphasize that dialogue is a playful activity whose primary purpose is to play playfully. From ancient philosophy onwards, dialogue is identified as *mimicry*, a “work of art”, a playful game of reasoning.³⁵ Dialogue is a form of sociability (*Geselligkeit*) where the substitution of reality with a game of mutual challenges is a creative rather than a destructive process. For a dialogue to be successful, the equality of the participants is a precondition. A second important precondition for the dialogue is that those engaged in it are serious in their endeavour. The dialogue has to have content, for unless all the participants are engaged in it in a “serious way”, it becomes a mere formality marked by superficiality rather than lightness.³⁶

From the games identified in the previous chapter, the games of competition (*konkurencsiya* and *sorevnovaniya*) are candidates for the kind of dialogue outlined above. This is because, although they are competitive forms of engagement, these games entail a community of players that share a respect for the rules, even if they do not always play according to them. The reasoning for the ‘optimization’ of Russia’s interest does not *per se* point to conflict with the EU sphere of interests, especially if it is coupled with cooperative strategies in other fields. On the other hand, if ‘optimization’ is situated against a background of control and coherence, the allegedly positive-sum thinking (for example the Strategy 1520) takes the form of a zero-sum game. Even if the logic of playing the game of ‘competition’ and that of ‘cooperation’ is different, the common trait in these games is that they

³³ The EU and Russia agreed in October 2005 to create the *EU–Russia Transport Dialogue*, fashioned along the lines of the Energy Dialogue. The five working groups have been established within the framework of the dialogue. They deal, respectively, with transport strategies and infrastructure; transport security; air transport; maritime, sea, river and inland waterway transport; and road and rail transport. The *New Northern Dimension* creates yet another regionally focused framework for cooperation. The establishment of the *Northern Dimension Partnership on Transport and Logistics* was proposed as a model of cooperation in this field.

³⁴ Emerson 2006.

³⁵ Huizinga 1984, 172–173.

³⁶ Noro points to the similarity between Simmel’s conceptualization of a game and that of Caillois. Noro 1991, 45, 56–62; Simmel 1949.

are relatively public, presupposing both a community of players and recourse to the formal rules of the game.

From the viewpoint of the consolidation of the dialogue between Russia and the EU, the last pair of games (simulation and vertigo) is the most challenging. The playing of these games proceeds from the public sphere whereby the policy loses visible signposts that would help in assessing its outlines. Instead, the public domain of the politics acquires features of razzmatazz. This means that the public performatives are ambiguous and contain an element of improvisation. At the policy-implementation level, improvisation means pursuing the policy in accordance with the unwritten (non-public) rules that we may have access to only through traces of zigzagging. In the current parlance, the notion of strategic sectors and industries is subject to the kind of zigzagging discussed in this study. The identification of Russia's policy in terms of state "strategic interests" subsumes within its sphere actions which, at the outset, would seem to fall within the sphere of economics. From the viewpoint of the dialogue between Russia and the EU, this presents a problem when it is coupled with the games of chance and vertigo which, although they also presuppose agreement on the rules of conduct, are more prone to arbitrariness, to the whim of chance, and to the self-sufficient strategies of engaging in the dialogue.

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Note on transliteration

Russian words are transliterated using the Library of Congress transliteration system without diacritics.

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