

## **Who is travelling from where to where, and why? Results from a questionnaire-based mobility study in the greater area of the Baykal-Amur Mainline**

The Baykal-Amur Mainline (BAM) is one of the grand projects of the Soviet “Master the North” programmes. Out of a colonialist perspective, it succeeded: the railway brought settlements and industry, development and modest wealth to a region, which formerly had been characterised by a predominantly semi-nomadic subsistence economy. The construction of the railway line and the subsequently established extractive industry required an enormous work force and caused an influx of a new population. Passenger transport gained in importance, but also saw severe hits: the fall of the Soviet Union and the economic crises of the 1990ies put an end to many travel subsidy programmes; the recent boom of the extractive industries causes an even stronger focus on cargo transport; public transport supply is on a steady decline.

In an era of increasing mobility, people travel nevertheless. This is a report on a questionnaire-based study carried out alongside an ethnographic field research carried out in the greater BAM region, on and off the railway. The survey inquired about travel patterns, seasonality, the satisfaction with transport (opportunities) and past developments, expectations for a future development of infrastructure and public transport, and a detailed account of an exemplary trip, including mode of transport, trip duration and distance, expenses and others.

We seek to provide answers to questions such as:

- How frequently and how far do people in remote areas such as the BAM region travel?
- How much do they spend on travelling?
- Which modes of transport are used?
- Do the seasons govern the mobility of people, or do they rather only influence the parameters of their trips?
- How much influence do travel subsidies have on the choice of mode of transport?
- In a region characterised by large distances and scarce public transport, do people feel satisfied with their mobility options? Does the level of remoteness of their place of residence play a significant role?

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The railway did not only bring development, infrastructure, and – to a certain extent – wealth, but also

large into a large region, formerly predominantly semi-nomadic subsistence