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The rhythms of trains and work along the Baikal-Amur Mainline

Rhythms define presence and co-presence of certain actants in certain place at a certain time, regulated both by physical and biological forces and social orders. The second aspect, i.e. schedules and timetables, is important for the railroad industry, where few minute delays cause serious consequences. When a railroad is the main means of ground transportation, as in the case of the Baikal-Amur Mainline (BAM), the impacts of the rhythms of trains on people's everyday life activities becomes crucial.

The construction of the BAM, a biggest socialist industrial project, has led to the emergence of the whole communities servicing the railroad. Currently, the role of the railroad, as a transit route for transportation of cargo and natural resources to the Asian markets, increases, while passenger transportation becomes an issue under the market conditions. Yet, the railroad has a paramount social significance for employees of the Russian Railroads Company, currently administering the BAM, and SMEs associated with the railroad. Railroad maintenance workers' private lifestyles are highly dependent on train schedules. The workers of railway station shops and cafeterias, as well as petty traders are tied to train schedules in terms of their working hours and supply of good, for which passenger trains' mail-baggage cars are used

Based on the field data gathered in Ust'-Kut, Severobaikalsk and Tynda in 2016, the paper examines how the everyday lives and economic activities of these groups of people are entangled with the railroad rhythms.