

Reconstructing the Baikal-Amur Mainline: Effects and Affects of Modernization

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Map of Baikal-Amur Mainline (BAM)



Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/>

BAM History

1932-1953 – first eastern sections constructed by GULAG inmates



1972-1984 - built for resource exaction and transportation



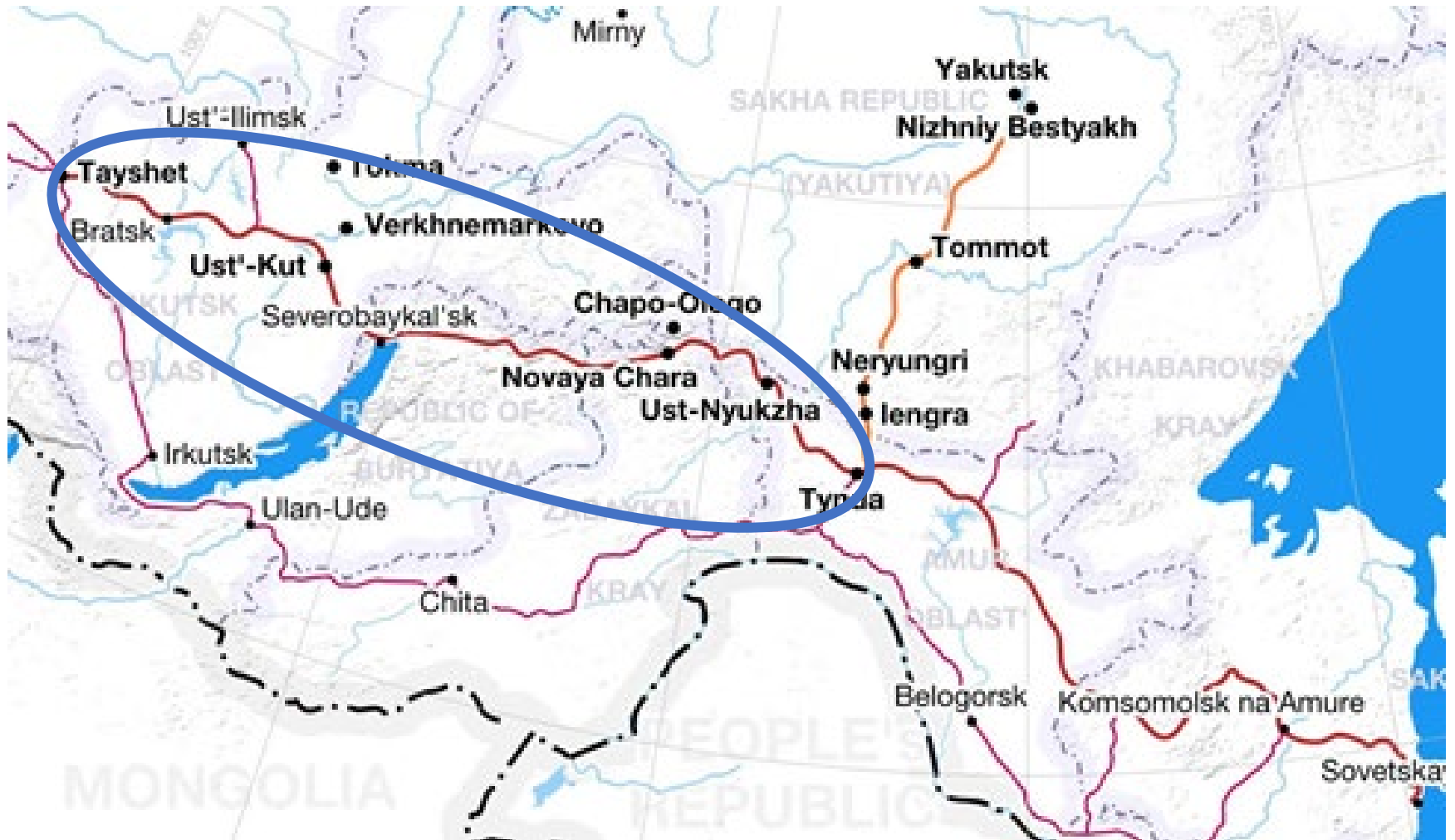
Approaches

- BAM as part of Soviet modernism (Scott 1999)
- Ideological continuity and durability of material structures in new economic conditions (Collier 2011)
- Failure and disillusion inherent in Soviet modernization project (Ssorin-Chaikov 2016)
- Promises of modernity (Harvey and Knox 2012)
- (Post)socialist politics of emotions (Svasek 2006)

Research Focus

- Infrastructure as embodiment of modernization projects and politics of emotion
- Socialist BAM vs. reconstruction program BAM-2
- Soviet ideologies, images and emotions as a resource

Field Sites



Effects: Local Communities



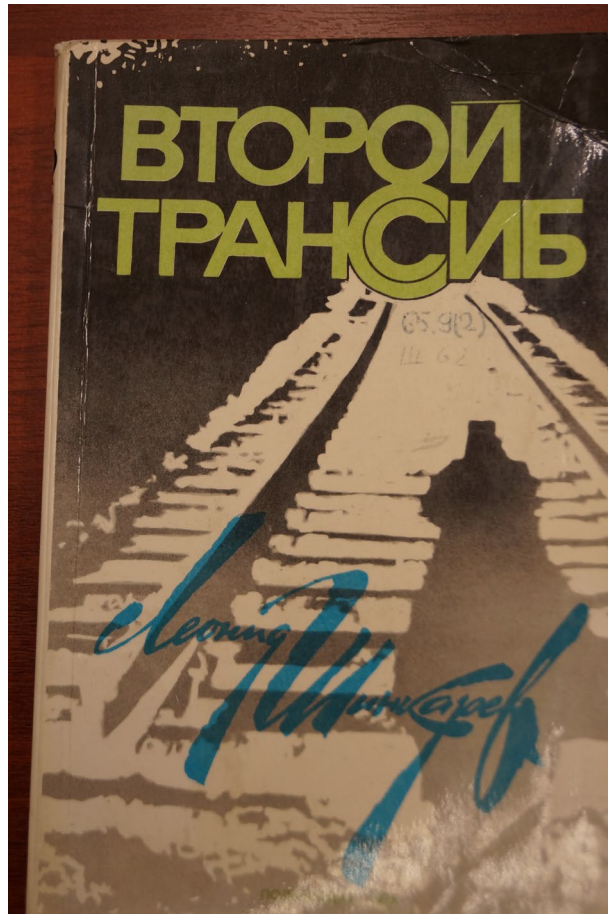
Source: Museum of the BAM construction, Tynda



Photo by Peter Schweitzer, Severobaikal'sk, 2016

Affects: "Myth" of the BAM

*"Sunny cities will rise tomorrow
where taiga currently grows"*



BAM in the 1990s

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- Unfinished infrastructure and unfulfilled development plans
 - De-modernization, collapse
 - Population “flight”
 - Public criticism



BAM Reconstructed



БАМ-2



Source: https://pikabu.ru/story/rekonstruktsiya_bama_i_transsiba_izyiskaniya_4166924



Source: <http://news.invest.kz/114857015-rzhd-ne-poluchit-deneg-na-bam-i-transsib>

Conclusions

- Embodiment of state modernization and affects
- BAM vs. BAM-2: path-dependency vs. restructuring
- Affective infrastructure cycle: promise and failure
- Emotions are objectified to strengthen the political regime

Acknowledgements

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- Project colleagues and partners
- Informants and local organizations
- More information:
<https://core.univie.ac.at/objectives/component-a/>