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Fonds of Regional Planning Agencies as a Most Valuable Source on the Dynamics and Standards of Living of the Urban Population of Eastern Siberia: 1954–84

Abstract

The article reviews archival fonds containing collections of the planning committees in three biggest Siberian cities: Irkutsk, Krasnoyarsk, and Novosibirsk. The Gosplan of the USSR acted as one of the pillars of the Soviet economic system, and hence of the Soviet society. This organization, by virtue of its official duties, was to possess the most complete information on the state of national economy, as well as on characteristics, needs, and requirements of the population living in towns and villages of the vast country. Despite the importance of this organization, which had its cells in every administrative unit of the country, its activities have been poorly studied by historians and urbanists. This is especially true of the territory of Eastern Siberia. This situation is due to the fact that its fonds have been classified until recently when most archives have lifted these restrictions. However, the huge volume of the fonds (fonds 1478 and 1300 of the State Archive of the Krasnoyarsk Krai are among the largest in the region) and their poor organization complicate working with these collections. Nevertheless, they allow a comprehensive disclosure of the issues of the Soviet city. Turning to urban studies, a historian may feel lost in front of the huge volume of dynamically changing facts, phenomena, processes. Despite rigid unified structure of the Gosplan, the quality of its collections in the local archives depended largely on local managers and employees. Among three largest cities of Siberia (Irkutsk, Krasnoyarsk, Novosibirsk), only Novosibirsk possesses a great number of documents, well sorted and organized, supplied with reference material. The Krasnoyarsk fond is rich in information, especially analytical. However, its organization is chaotic, collections remaining as they were transferred to the archive. Irkutsk has the poorest collection and, being scattered over several archives, it is poorly accessible to researchers. Moreover, the State Archive of the Irkutsk Region has no modern digitized guide to its Soviet period fonds. In general, given the informational value of the planning agencies fonds in the cities of Eastern Siberia, two things should be noted. First, it is necessary to make them more accessible to researchers through transfer and digitization. Second, it is necessary to write a history of regional planning

commissions and biographies of their leaders. Working with materials of these funds should be the first step for any researcher concerned with socio-economic development of Eastern Siberia.

### Keywords

Historical sources, urban studies, largest cities of Eastern Siberia, Gosplan of USSR, kraiplan, obiplan, Krasnoyarsk, Irkutsk, Novosibirsk, archival funds.

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