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## RUSSIAN HUMAN GEOGRAPHY OF THE EARLY 21st CENTURY: STUDYING NEW PROCESSES AND USING NEW OPPORTUNITIES

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### From the Editors

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**Abstract**—Since 2022, the journal *Regional Research of Russia* is publishing special issues on important topics in human geography, regional economics, and sociology. This special issue has been prepared for the centennial of the International Geographical Union celebrated at its Extraordinary Congress in Paris (July 2022) and includes seven review articles, commissioned and written by leading Russian experts in the respective fields. The topics of the articles were chosen so that the special issue reflects areas in which the most striking results have been achieved and which are specific to Russia. The authors have tried, as far as possible, to compare the topics, methodological approaches, and research results with the world mainstream. The main focus is on the last decade, 2010–2021; when necessary, the authors also have referred to earlier publications. The authors of most of the articles paid attention to the developments that arose in 2020–2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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The International Geographical Union (IGU) is the only global organization bringing together geographers from more than 100 countries: scientists, teachers, and practitioners. It is one of the oldest academic associations in the world. In July 2022, the IGU will solemnly celebrate its centenary at the Extraordinary International Geographical Congress in Paris. However, in fact, the history of the IGU is more than a hundred years old. Its formal establishment in Brussels under the auspices of the International Council for Science was preceded by ten International Geographical Congresses, the first of which took place in 1871 in Antwerp.

By tradition, International Geographical Congresses, which are held every four years, are an occasion for national geographical communities to look back and evaluate the achievements of the national geographical school and compare the pace and direction of its development with global trends. The anniversary congress is a particularly significant stimulus to take stock and outline ways to expand the front and depth of geographical research and strengthen international scientific cooperation.

It has become a tradition of the leading national committees of the IGU for each International Geographical Congress to publish collections representing the most notable, and interesting to the international scientific community, research results in individual

disciplines and problems. However, due to the development of new means of scientific communication, this tradition is now observed somewhat less frequently. The Soviet and later Russian national committees of the IGU tried to present the main achievements of recent years at each congress. Therefore, prior to the 33rd International Geographical Congress in Beijing, the collection *Socioeconomic Geography* in Russia was published<sup>1</sup> in Russian and English, in which leading experts in various subdisciplines of human geography presented a systematic review of their formation and current state.

The mission of *Regional Research of Russia*, which is published in English, is precisely to acquaint foreign readership with the best works on human geography, regional economics and sociology, spatial planning, regional policy, studies of cities and rural areas of Russia and its regions, and other countries of the former USSR. The authors therein are primarily Russian specialists, but the journal is also open to foreign colleagues; international collaborations are also welcome. Some articles are original works; the rest are selected by the editorial board from the latest publications in Russian journals, primarily *Izvestia Rossiiskoi Akademii Nauk, Seriya Geograficheskaya*; *Region:*

<sup>1</sup> *Socioeconomic Geography in Russia*, P.Ya. Baklanov and V.E. Shuvalov, Eds., Vladivostok: Dalnauka, 2016.

*Economika i Sotsiologiya*, and *Izvestia Russkogo Geograficheskogo Obshchestva*. These articles are blind reviewed again and in most cases sent to the authors for revision before translation into English. For more than a decade, the journal's experience has clearly shown the role played by language and national characteristics of the presentation of research in scientific communication. These are associated not only with scientific categories and terminology (the content of even the same, at first glance, terms is frequently different), but also the structure of the article, theoretical background, and topic itself. This is especially true of geography as a regional science: even an article on a certain territory or city that meets high standards may only be of interest to a foreign audience when it clearly identifies general and specific problems.

Since 2022, the journal is publishing special issues dedicated to important topics in human geography, regional economics, and sociology. This special issue has been prepared for the centennial of the International Geographical Union celebrated at its Extraordinary Congress in Paris (July 2022) and includes seven review articles. The editors have decided to abandon a review of the state of all or most branches of human geography, as was done prior to the congress in Beijing (this would require an entire book), and focus on areas in which the most striking results have been achieved and which are specific to Russia, trying whenever possible to compare them with the global mainstream. It was also decided to refuse from an overview of research for the entire post-Soviet period. Such a temptation arose, in particular, in connection with the 30th anniversary of the collapse of the USSR, which in 2021 drove a large flow of publications in the Russian scientific press and mass media. However, this would require a dedicated research project. In the articles of this special issue, the authors focused on the last decade, 2010–2021, which, of course, did not exclude the use of earlier publications, if necessary. The reviews were commissioned to leading Russian experts in the respective fields.

The special issue opens with an article by T.G. Nefedova, A.I. Treivish, and A.V. Sheludkov on spatial uneven development in Russia. The uneven development of different parts of the country, deep territorial disproportions, and socioeconomic, ethnocultural, and other contrasts between its regions are the key characteristics of the Russian space. On the one hand, as the article demonstrates, spatial inequality is an important driver of Russia's socioeconomic development. The concentration of population and economic activity in key, advanced regions and the most important urban centers is vital for the country. In the international division of labor, such concentration helps to increase the competitiveness of the national economy and strengthen its position in world markets. On the other hand, polarization narrows the space for socioeconomic development, leaving few chances for other areas of the country.

The article by E.V. Antonov, N.K. Kurichev and A.I. Treivish discusses the trends of the last decade in the development and study of Russia's urban system and its largest urban agglomerations, Moscow, in particular. The authors have identified the features of the network of cities in the country against the global background and analyzed and summarized the most important shifts in the urban settlement pattern. The ongoing process of population concentration in major cities and urban agglomerations in Russia is noted with the degradation of the lower levels of the urban system—small towns and urban-type settlements. Particular attention is paid to interpreting the factors of change in the national network of major urban agglomerations. The article shows that the demographic growth resource of smaller agglomerations is decreasing versus Moscow and St. Petersburg: they grow more slowly or even losing population. Migration is becoming a key factor in the development of agglomerations; the growing polarization of the labor market between centers of agglomerations, their outer belts, and the periphery outside the agglomeration is generating large-scale return labor and permanent migrations. Against this, the Moscow urban agglomeration stands out sharply, gradually consolidating the core of the emerging Central Russian megalopolis.

The subject of research in the article by A.G. Makhrova, R.A. Babkin, P.L. Kirillov, A.V. Starikova, and A.V. Sheludkov is the return mobility and pulsations of the population in the space of post-Soviet Russia. The authors note that the domestic practice of studying various types of temporary mobility of the population is in line with priority areas of research on the spatiotemporal population dynamics currently studied abroad. However, in Russia these processes have their own specifics. In particular, studies of dacha migrations and *otkhodnichestvo* are of great importance for the country. The article assesses the scale of distribution of various types of population mobility across Russia and examines in detail their intensity, rhythmic patterns, and the most important factors. The authors demonstrate the great scientific potential of using methods of population pulsations analysis in relation to the spatiotemporal variability of settlement systems.

The next article, by L.B. Karachurina, N.V. Mkrtyan, and M.S. Savoskul addresses migration problematics. The authors analyze the development of studies of population migration in the social geography of Russia over the past decade, with a detailed review and analysis of publications on this topic in leading geographical journals, scientific monographs, as well as dissertations. Particular attention is paid to the possibilities of studying the internal migration of the Russian population using new data. The authors note that after 2010, Russian geographers' interest in studying migration in foreign countries, as well as in studying the processes of migrant settlement at the intracity level, has increased significantly. It is

emphasized that the level of detail of the migration information now makes it possible to conduct research at the level of municipalities. The emergence of fundamentally new information sources makes it possible to study the time cycles of spatial mobility of the population, e.g., using data from cellular networks, social networks, etc.

V.N. Streletsky and S.A. Gorokhov in their article compare modern trends in the development of Russian cultural geography with the latest global trends in the evolution of this geographical science. In contrast to Western countries, in Russia for a good part of the 20th century (during the Soviet era), cultural geography developed poorly; its rapid revival began only at the end of the 20th century. The article shows that the Russia's geographical and ethnocultural specifics are directly reflected in the nature and features of Russian cultural geography at the beginning of the 21st century. Cultural–landscape research is especially significant. Cultural geography, which developed during the Soviet period as part of population geography, is gradually transforming to ethnocultural geography. There is great focus on the correlation of ethnic and regional identity in multiethnic regions, ethnocultural aspects of the geography of resource use, and cultural geography of indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia, and Far East. Religious geography is a new direction of cultural geography for Russia, which has gained great relevance in the post-Soviet period in the revival of religious life in a country characterized by exceptional complexity and diverse religious composition of the population. Territorial identity studies have also become the newest pole of growth.

The article by V.A. Kolosov, M.V. Zotova, and N.L. Turov emphasizes that geopolitics in Russia is still booming: the number of publications is constantly growing, but geographers make up a very small, although very significant portion of authors. In the geographical literature on geopolitics, critical geopolitics has become an alternative to the absolutely dominant neoclassical approaches in the last decade. A number of research projects have been carried out in

this paradigm; theoretical works have also appeared. A significant flow of publications cover the “pivot to the east” in Russian politics and the concept of “Greater Eurasia.” This concept substantiates the formation “a space of free trade, development, peace and security, and conditions for the sovereign development of all its member countries, cultures and civilizations” from Vladivostok, or Shanghai, to Lisbon. A growing field in Russian political geography is border studies. Their themes and approaches are basically similar to those of European scientists. At the junction of political and physical geography and other sciences, studies of ways of sustainable development and management of cross-border natural areas arose. The topic of a considerable number of publications was the formation of international regions of different levels (regionalization). Problems of international conflicts remain topical in Russia, in particular, the developments in six unrecog-nized republics close to its borders.

The special issue ends with an article by V.R. Bituykova, which discusses the environmental consequences of post-Soviet transformation of the sectoral structure of the economy. The author identifies factors and spatiotemporal patterns in the dynamics and structural characteristics of the environmental situation during periods of crises and economic growth. The author demonstrates the gradual weakening of the role of industrial specialization in the formation of the environmental situation and simplification of the types of anthropogenic impact on the natural environment in Russian regions. As the author notes, the trends of changes in the environmental situation in regions are generally smoother than in cities. The more diversified the economy of a region, the smaller the fluctuations of anthropogenic impact; the more developed large cities in the region, the more complex and diverse the factors of its environmental situation.

#### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.