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RUSSIAN RURAL NECHERNOZEMYE: COLLAPSE OR NEW WAYS OF DEVELOPMENT?

ABSTRACT. The article describes the evolution and the crisis of the rural old-developed non-black soil zone (i.e., Nechernozemye), the differences between suburban and peripheral areas as exemplified by the Kostroma and other regions, basic models of economic contraction, as well as prospects for revival by urban residents.

KEY WORDS: non-black soil zone, peripherals, depopulation, rural settlement, agriculture and forestry, development centers, manageable economic contraction, vacationers.

INTRODUCTION

Polarization of space in Russia

In the past 20 years, Russia has gone through a difficult period: reform, crisis, and recovery from the crisis with a change of development paradigm. In recent years, the innovative development has been declared. It involves modernizing the economy, which is always uneven and depends on many factors, primarily, on the human capacity, financial resources, and many other basic factors, including the country's size and nature of its development.

The processes of development of the vast space of Russia in the XX century have been associated with localization of development as a consequence of the concentration of population, infrastructure, and economy in the areas of resource extraction, in cities, suburbs, and the South. As a result, the

expansion of development, in general, often also meant the growth of sparsely populated underutilized areas. And even in the European old-developed non-black soil zone of Russia (i.e., Nechernozemye), the area of economic and socio-demographic decline expanded because of the long-term depopulation and migration of the active part of the population to cities.

Growing economic and socio-demographic differences between different parts and spatial objects in Russia suggest its polarization. In this case, most often considered are the differences between the regions – subjects of the Russian Federation. However, differences between municipalities within a single subject are much larger than inter-regional differences.

The criteria for differentiation of Russia's territory may be the nature and intensity of use, level of development and state of the economy, population size and density, the quality of human capital, and infrastructure development. Expanding managed space, the country has been gradually compressed into separate "islands of development". The concentration of population and its activities in certain central areas have led to the formation of the centers (in rural areas, suburbs play the role of centers) and of the periphery. Problems of center-periphery relations in Russia have been a subject of a large volume of scientific research [Gritsay et al., 1991; Kaganskiy, 2001; Pilyasov, 2008; Rodoman, 2002; Treivish, 2003, 2009]. Peripherality (peripherality indicator is

usually a physical distance from some center) can be considered in multi-scale sense [Nefedova, 2008a]: (1) on a small scale – the outer periphery (outskirts of the country far from its major cities); (2) on an average scale – the intra-periphery (areas remote from the centers of regions); and (3) on a large scale – the periphery of the local areas (rural areas, remote from the local centers). In this paper, we focus on the periphery of the inner regions of the old-developed non-black soil regions. This phenomenon is caused by strong intra-regional contrasts in the direction and level of socio-economic development of the territories.

PROBLEMS OF AGRICULTURE OF THE ON-BLACK-SOIL TERRITORIES

In the Soviet period, agriculture has been supported by the state as the main economic sector in rural areas in many parts of the non-black soil territories. During the process of urbanization of the XX century, rural population ebbed, especially in the areas with difficult natural conditions, while the kolkhozy (collective farms) continued to increase livestock and cultivate grain, regardless of the objective natural conditions and, especially, social and economic constraints.

Problems in these areas have been evident since the 1970s when increased investment in agriculture in much of the non-black soil territories no longer provided an adequate return [Ioffe, 1990, Ioffe; Nefedova, 1997; Nefedova, 2003, pp. 91–99]. But they are even clearer now because, in the new economic conditions, the state has ceased to support their inefficient production. Severe natural conditions are not the only factor of agriculture failure, although fragmentation, waterlogging, and low productivity of land are also significant. However, even before the crisis of the 1990s, yields in the north and the west of the Moscow region were 5–10 kg/ha lower than even naturally conditioned (i.e. obtained at special sites where heat and moisture was typical without applying special measures). It is particularly

strongly affected by the consequences of urbanization followed by rural depopulation. Rural populations moved not only to cities, but to the suburbs of the cities also. On the maps of population density in the non-black soil territories, widening socio-demographic hole is seen in the peripheral areas.

Urbanization and rural depopulation of the periphery are global processes. But Russia has had two distinguishing features of the process: a huge space with a relatively sparse network of large cities that create zones of increased economic activity around themselves, and the sluggishness of the state and collective farms not wanting to adapt to new social and geographical realities, including consequences of depopulation. For example, the average distance between cities with a population of more than 100 thousand people (these cities in the non-black soil zone form regions with the best demographic and economic indicators) are more than 180 km even in the European part outside of the Moscow region. With the average radius of suburban districts of 30 to 40 km and shrinking rural population, the rest of the territory turned out to be as if thrown out of an active economic life; the population out-migrated from there especially actively [Nefedova, pp. 298–305].

In contrast with Western European countries, where the density of cities is much higher and agriculture has gradually adapted to the diminishing population, changing organization, technology, reduced acreage, and increased productivity, the Russian state and collective farms expanded agricultural plots and built huge cattle complexes in places lacking manpower. The governing party strictly controlled the process, so that huge subsidies were allocated and decrease of livestock was not allowed even in cases of illnesses and lack of forage. Therefore, everything collapsed overnight when the replacement of administrative and enforcement economy with market economy took place. These processes have been preconditioned over the course of previous development. Hopes for small-scale

farmers in such areas were not fulfilled and people were not ready for independent legal business and preferred to isolate themselves in their individual farms; only occasionally, these farms became commodity producing [Pallot, Nefedova, 2007]. The situation is particularly difficult in the zones of risky agriculture away from the cities where three factors that limit the development of agriculture act together: the complexity of natural conditions, depopulation, and a deep economic crisis.

Since 1999, agriculture in Russia, in general, has been restoring production. But this is not true of many non-black soil areas. The crisis of the 1990s and, especially, its end, were to a large extent regionally differentiated. The first to recover from the crisis were the regions of southern Russia, due to the expansion of grain production and partial recovery of the poultry and swine stock. But even there, the loss of cattle was disastrous. Paradoxically, livestock was better preserved around large cities, as well as in the national republics. The maximal loss of livestock has been registered and continues in the regions of the North, Far East, and the peripheral areas of the non-black soil territories.

Thus, in Russia, there is an apparent paradox: dairy farming drifts away from the non-black soil territories with abundant grasses and succulent feeds. Most businesses there are not profitable. Farmers in these areas are rare, except for individual migrant enthusiasts from other regions and the CIS countries. There are several reasons for that; the major of them is a strong depopulation and the depletion of manpower in the non-black soil territories accompanied by the degradation of the rural social environment. Together with low purchase prices, inability to acquire equipment, and unsettled countryside it impedes any development there. There is also a technological explanation. Where grasses are abundant, winters are long and severe. Thus, additional costs for feed and heating emerge, which increase the cost of livestock products. Therefore, livestock breeding becomes a difficult business

possible only for large enterprises gravitating towards the southern districts and suburbs of large cities.

“North-south” and “suburbia-periphery” dichotomies are characteristic of the dynamics of crop production. In Russia, the total gross agricultural production was growing while acreage was declining until 2008, which also indicated the selective nature of crisis recovery. Southern companies were more successful in the early 2000s; in the non-black soil territories and in Siberia, only suburban companies were more successful. The main characteristics of the land loss of two macro-regions: the non-black soil territories and the arid regions of the Volga, the Urals and Siberia are as follows. In the first group, more than half of the cultivated area used in 1990 was abandoned; in the second group, the crop losses amounted to 30–40%. However, in the 2000s, in many regions of the Volga and the Urals, partial cultivation of the abandoned land has begun, largely spurred by the rising profitability of growing corn in steppe areas. In the non-black soil zone, abandoned cultivated area has not been ever recovered and continued to decline on the periphery of the region. The degree of pre-crisis plowing there has been clearly higher than the natural and social opportunities allowed it to be.

PROBLEMS OF FOREST SECTOR OF THE OLD-DEVELOPED REGIONS

Although agriculture was the main industry defining the character of the non-black soil zone and the state and collective farms were the main organizers of local life, reforms in forestry of 1990s–2000s have also significantly affected the rural life. It is especially true because not only in the north of European Russia, but also in the old-developed areas, along the sub-Taiga axis of Novgorod–Kirov–Perm, there was a network of remote forestry settlements, where the sole employer and the organizer of the local life was timber industry. In the agricultural settlements of the non-black soil territories, the use of forests has also had significant value.

Agricultural enterprises received free use of large plots of so-called collective forests, and many unprofitable farms made a profit only from the sale and partial processing of wood, or even from the sale of rights to exploit their forests, thereby recovering losses from agricultural activities.

After several changes in forest legislation in the 1990s and especially with the new Forest Code in 2006, the pattern of the use of forests has changed dramatically. The category of the so-called agricultural forests was eliminated. All users have gained access to the forests on a rental basis (by auctions and tenders). The responsibility of caring for the forests was assigned to tenants. All this have especially exacerbated the situation for small users [Kuzminov, 2011], including agricultural enterprises, small companies and private traders, and individual sawmills.

The elimination of state logging companies and the shift of the responsibility for logging to private companies have significantly reduced the need for employment in logging. Along with the transformation and the crisis of agricultural enterprises, it led to the release of a significant number of workers who had no other jobs, and weak business activity could not provide their employment in rural areas and small towns. Some of them went to cities and other areas; others tried to earn money by temporarily working in major centers or in timber harvesting in

other regions or were ruining themselves by drinking trying to escape from idleness and hopelessness of the country life. The most affected are those peripheral areas of the non-black soil territories that are remote from the main routes and do not fall within the area of raw materials supply for large timber processing enterprises.

THE CASE STUDY OF RURAL AREAS OF THE KOSTROMA REGION

The Kostroma region is a typical example of the Russian non-black soil territories. It is located in the north-east of the Central district on the border of the forest zone and southern taiga. Its main characteristics are a strong and long-term outflow of the rural population, production specialization mainly on the lowest technological levels of agriculture and forestry, absence of the deep processing of products, and low investment attractiveness.

Internal socio-economic contrasts are expressed there very clearly. Since 1959, the rural population has not changed only in suburban area of Kostroma, while in all other areas, it decreased by more than two-thirds (Fig. 1).

The rural population density in the suburban district of Kostroma is 22 people per sq km, while, in the surrounding areas, it is only 6–10; at the periphery it is only 2–3. The suburbs have been actively used in the

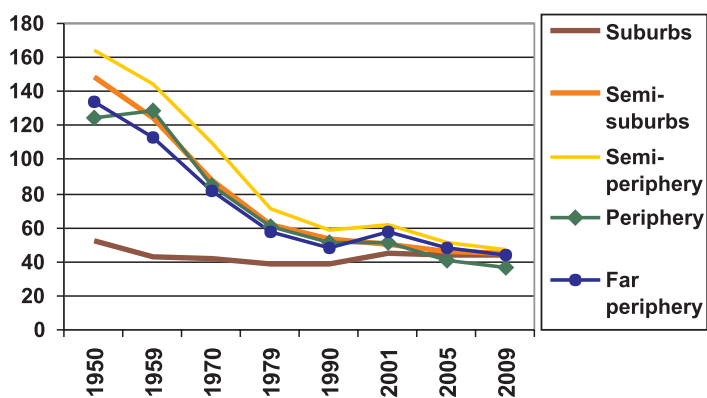


Fig. 1. Rural population of the Kostroma region in zones of varying distance from the city of Kostroma (1950 to 2009, thousand people)

Soviet period, so they have accumulated the production capacity. Local businesses and businesses from large cities, for example, from Vologda and Moscow, have been establishing there. Business managers have more experience than local managers in the peripheries have. There is a consolidation of agribusiness and acquisitions of the weak by the strong, which takes place because the latter have not enough land. Average milk production per cow in the Kostroma region, in 2009–2010, was over 4300 kg, and, in some plants, is almost of Western levels of 6000 kg.

The suburb region, comprising 3.4% of the region size, concentrates one-fifth of its rural population and a quarter of the regional gross agricultural production. Even under relatively unfavorable natural conditions, agricultural production of the north non-black soil territories, in the agricultural center around Kostroma, and in two regions along the Volga River to the south will continue. But the suburban zone has its own features. This, above all, is the competition for better-paying urban jobs, so there is a shortage of workers in agriculture. Strong competition and other resource uses, including recreational, affect the job market in the Kostroma region. In recent years, profitable investments are the investments in land: the price in the suburbs is growing rapidly, so that banks, construction firms, and private traders are

actively buying agricultural land. Artificial bankruptcy is increasing practice, so that successful businesses attractive to outside buyers are bankrupted. There remain only major economy actors, firmly occupying a niche market, who create their own branches in more neighboring territories richer in land. There are also a large number of dacha cottages in suburbs owned by Kostroma citizens, but the market for this land is lower. In semi-suburb areas, agribusinesses are somewhat weaker, but there are more farms. In these zones, business is subject to availability of land and is relatively close to the center of the rural environment, so it is not as hopeless as in the periphery.

A completely different situation is in the semi-periphery and the periphery areas that are particularly extensive and, due to the eccentricity of the regional center, have shifted to the south-western outskirts. Large agribusinesses have almost no chance of survival there. Long-term support for unprofitable enterprises, which, in truly market conditions, would not exist, has contributed to the preservation of the Soviet type weak agricultural sector. The milk yield per cow, which serves as an indicator of the state enterprises under similar environmental conditions, with an abundance of pasture, both in the Soviet era and now, is 2–2.5 times lower than in the suburbs (Fig. 2). The crisis is

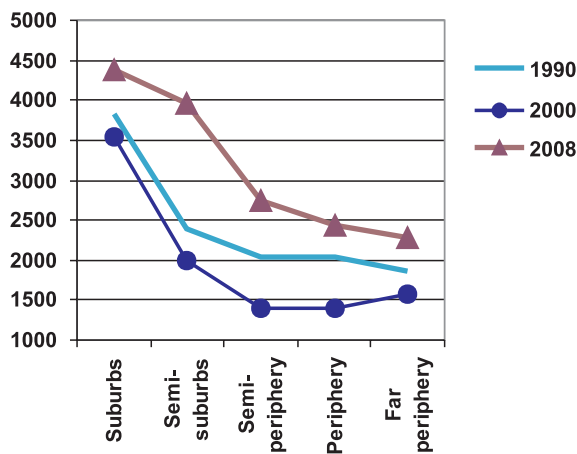


Fig. 2. Milk yield per cow in 1990, 2000 and 2008 in zones of varying distance from the city of Kostroma (kg per year)

only enhanced by the modern reforms. It is rooted much deeper. Sown area started to decline since the 1950s. However, during the implementation of the “boosting of the non-black soil zone” it grew again despite the catastrophic decline in population. A further decline in plantings began in 1980, although the program is still scheduled to increase arable land. By 2009, only third of the Soviet plowed areas remained plowed. Failure of agribusiness to generate revenue from timber sales and, thus, to replenish the capital only exacerbates the crisis in agriculture. Most farms have huge debts. At the same time, they are not yet bankrupt – they simply are not wanted. This has led to a sharp decrease in agricultural employment, except for individual plots. However, this process is dying too as the population is aging and almost all high-school graduates depart to cities.

Social problems in the periphery of the Kostroma region are compounded by a redistribution of property in the forestry sector and the collapse of a number of former state-owned forestry enterprises. It has also led to a strong reduction of employment.

With such a compression of the companies in the periphery and despite the long-term depopulation, an excess of workers has developed. Formally, on average, a third of working-age population is employed in agriculture, forestry, and public sector. One-fifth commutes temporarily to cities for work; another fifth is, in fact, is unable to work due to alcoholism. Others depend entirely on their own farms or conduct criminal activity, including poaching. At the same time, official level of unemployment is very low. However, in recent years, it began to grow due to unnecessary high subsidies (up to 5000 rubles, in 2010), comparable with official salaries. Often, the benefits are even greater than salaries often paid with delays. This further complicates the problem of staffing companies and so they are often on the verge of survival.

Thus, the quantitative deficiency of labor is not the concern. Even in these peripheral depopulated areas, there is a quantitative excess of population in rural areas with insufficient jobs. These jobs are not created because of the competition from urban jobs and the quality of the local workforce. In such areas, as well as virtually in the entire non-black soil territories outside Moscow and the suburbs of big cities, there is an obvious shortage of quality labor, which is associated with the degraded social environment. It pushes the working-age population to cities and suburbs to seek permanent residence or temporary work.

In each peripheral area of the Kostroma region, there are several local points of growth: strong single farms (essentially farms evading taxes), logging companies, and retail outlets. But, as a rule, immigrants from other regions of Russia and the former Soviet republics run these businesses.

OTHER REGIONS OF THE NON-BLACK-SOIL TERRITORIES

The Novgorod oblast is situated between two major centers that, for many years, have been draining the rural population. There are also large suburban-periphery contrasts. For example, the Novgorod region contributes 30% of the agricultural products of the oblast. Promising are the areas along the border with the Leningrad oblast, entering the zone of influence of St. Petersburg. Other areas are characterized by a sharp contraction of acreage and of total care for crops and traditional linen, and a by heavy loss of livestock.

The suburbs of Velykyi Novgorod, as well as of Kostroma, is the only area in the region that has not lost its rural population in the second half of the XX century, while, in other areas, it has declined by more than half or, even, 3–4 fold. Thus, there has been a total decline of agricultural employment resulting in the population decline. Hence, in rural areas, there is high real unemployment rate combined with business leaders lacking

good workforce, as all who are able to work either ran away from this environment or are unwilling to work in agricultural enterprises. The program to attract workers to the Novgorod and Pskov regions conducted in the Soviet period was renewed in 1990, but did not produce the expected results. The peripheral areas are not attractive to workers, while the suburban areas and the areas along mainlines are still used as an intermediate step between Novgorod and St. Petersburg.

Even in the non-black soil areas adjacent to the Moscow region, the crisis of agricultural peripheral territories is becoming more and more severe. However, the areas adjacent to the Moscow region, i.e., a vast metropolis suburb, have several advantages. They are free land with relatively low prices and rental rates. This, coupled with a close proximity to Moscow, attracts investors to the suburban areas. It is there that some agro-industrial firms in Moscow and Moscow oblast place their polluting livestock farms and acquire lands for cultivation and grasslands. Small private farming in the areas around Moscow, even in the nearby areas, is in decline. The exception is the suburbs of Ryazan and Tver, almost adjacent to the borders of the Moscow suburbs, and some businesses that were able to establish links with Moscow or the Moscow region processors of agricultural products. In addition, the highways connecting the neighboring provinces with Moscow are being provided with a growing number of logistics centers and construction materials plants, including those with foreign investment. Outside the main roads, there are mostly suburban cottages of Moscovites (different types and levels). At the same time, there is the onslaught of Moscow and near-Moscow businesses, which are buying land shares of the population and, sometimes, municipal lands, especially along the roads; this process is associated with the trend of continuous growth of land prices.

A growing outflow of personnel of all skill levels to Moscow and the Moscow region from the areas along mainlines, dictated

by the excess of the unemployed and the attractiveness of earnings in the metropolitan area, several times exceeding local potential, became a general problem of the "outer ring" suburbs. Out-migrating young people are completely non-returning, while middle-aged people are partially or completely held in place by their families, home, and gardens. Along with the influx of summer residents from Moscow, this leads to higher prices, but not to the development of local services, and only provides an additional incentive to the local population to commute for temporary jobs in the capital and its suburbs, often in a rotational manner.

Shift workers or seasonal workers in the remote regions make up around one-fifth of the workforce. In regions close to Moscow, their share is much larger. These people can represent basic manpower for recovery of rural areas, while relocation of population of cities to the countryside is not the solution to the problem today. Stimulating workers to return to the villages is much more complicated now than before.

RURAL SUPPORT

In Russia, the most popular measures of support are not measures of support of rural areas, but measures of agriculture support through direct subsidies to producers (including fuel, fertilizers, loan rates) and import restrictions. Of course, in order to develop agriculture, manufacturers should have some competitive advantages in the domestic market, which, without state support, cannot be achieved. But there are also competitive advantages of other territories of Russia compared with the non-black soil territories and the new territorial division of labor in the country that began to function in the 2000s. If grain production is several times less expensive in the southern regions of Russia, why was it necessary to have such large areas under crops in the non-black soil territories in the Soviet times? This was only possible with the unprecedented state support (subsidies covering more than 80% of expenses) without taking into

account the natural and social opportunities of different areas.

The average level of budget support to agricultural producers in Russia is estimated by the government to be at 6% (6 kopeks per 1 ruble of output), which is 2.7 and 5.4 times lower, respectively, than in the US and the EU. However, it is difficult to assess the degree of support because, in addition to direct support, some indirect methods exist. For example, in Russia, unlike the EU, the payment for the land of farmers and the total tax burden on them is low. Serova and Shick [2007] assess the level of support in Russia in the middle 2000s at 15–17%, which is quantitatively consistent with the support in the US. Nowadays, it is over 20%.

In recent years, Russia's tendency is in the decentralization of agricultural support and its shifting to regional budgets, which has important territorial implications. Individual rich northern industrial regions may help agrarian regions with favorable natural conditions more than they do now. As a result, the objective market processes of territorial division of labor, in recent years, have begun to falter. Cases of regional "fencing" and bans on the export of subsidized products outside the region, leading to the destruction of a single economic space, have reappeared.

Financing of agriculture under the national projects "Development of Agroindustrial Complex" (2006) and "State Program of Agricultural Development and Regulation of Agricultural Products, Raw Materials, and Foodstuffs" (2008–2012), despite the comprehensive approach, developed within conditions set by objective trends. Loans to modernize production (with most of the interest paid by the state) were given to viable enterprises located, more often, in the suburbs and in the South, which increased the polarization of the industry and lagging of the non-black soil territorial provinces. Increase of the attractiveness of credit resources for private households worked properly only in the areas where employment potential has been preserved.

However, as was discussed above, agriculture in the non-black soil territories has ceased to be a key industry. In many Western countries, regional programs target integrated territorial development, support of the population, infrastructure, and other lucrative activities. In Russia, this process has not yet fully developed. Moreover, since the mid-2000s and especially after the adoption of the Federal Law 131, the powers of local authorities were extended, while local communities (districts, villages) almost lost their own tax and non-tax revenues. The centralization of the cash flow has worsened the situation almost everywhere. At the periphery of the non-black soil areas, prior to the law, grants accounted for slightly more than half of the district budget. In addition, prior to the Forest Code, much of the regional allowances for the lease of forests, for example in the Kostroma region, went to the budgets of districts and settlements. Now transfers from higher budgets constitute about 90%. Local administration concerns are reduced, in essence, to survival, rather than to improving the population's living conditions.

One of the latest policies of the authorities is merging of rural communities and remote villages that are losing their population and having less than 200–300 people, into larger settlements. However, if such actions with respect to agricultural enterprises are dictated by the market and are economically justified, socially they are harmful to the countryside.

The idea of classifying villages into the promising and unpromising was launched in the late 1950s and has found reflection in the plans of agricultural division of the regions and districts of the non-black soil territories in the 1960s and early 1970s. In this respect, only one-fifth of villages were recognized as promising [Ioffe, 1990, pp.112]. By the end of 1970, this policy was stated as erratic, but it was already impossible to stop the shrinking of developed territories. Nowadays, the authorities are repeating the same mistake. Merging does not only mean

the transfer of administration to a larger settlement and gradual closing of schools, medical stations, recreation centers, and libraries in distant villages and groups of villages. It also means curtailment of social life and infrastructure. For example, in the periphery of the Kostroma region, the implementation of the plans of merging settlements will increase the distance between local centers and remote villages (whose population can be under hundreds of people) from 5–7 km to 20–25 km in the absence of regular bus services. Meager budget savings, which is referred to as the reason for the reform by the authorities, not only increase the outflow of working population, especially of working people with children, but also encourages the elderly to leave villages to live with their children in cities; this only speeds up the depopulation of the territories and leads to catastrophic shrinkage of developed space.

PROSPECTS OF PERIPHERAL AREAS OF THE NON-BLACK-SOIL TERRITORIES

Prospects of remote areas depend not only on the policy of authorities, but also on businesses, including those located in the cities, and on the activity of the local and migrant populations. Perhaps, the focal recovery of abandoned areas in agriculture and forestry is possible. Particularly promising, in this respect, is inter-regional, regional, and local agro-forestry complexes that, in order to increase resource base, are looking for the most successful farms in the peripheries. However, very few farms can be efficiently integrated into large enterprises.

The main limitation of these areas is socio-demographic factors and the demand for more qualified and able to work people, while there is an excess of the unemployed rural population. We must acknowledge that, in such regions, the economic model of “economic contraction” is still alive. It is accompanied by a decrease of the real working-age population and of the cultivated area. However, disaster can be avoided if the situation is not neglected or

is not deteriorated by inappropriate policies of contracting social and infrastructural components. There can be several options of the “economic contraction” model and they are not mutually exclusive.

The first option, “agricultural,” implies preservation of agricultural enterprises as long as they are in demand by the local population and entrepreneurs. Direct support for enterprises is carried out on the ground: through the formation of municipal structures and the inclusion of farmers in the local agricultural sector complexes, i.e. the acquisition of their farms by local processing enterprises in order to create a more stable raw material base. The rest, mostly unprofitable farms (former collective farms) experience a strong reduction of crops and livestock and become a kind of farms of their leaders (technically, they employ 20–30 people, but in reality, only the leader and several strong employees work there). The main policy in their respect should be not to push them into bankruptcy. Being suppliers of products to local factories in small towns, they thereby contribute to their survival. Agribusinesses, in the absence of self-organization of the population, often have a locale-building function; they remain, along with the administration of rural settlement, the organizers of local life. Plowing an order of magnitude smaller area than in the Soviet times, they still hold lands around villages in agricultural production preventing forest invasion.

The second option is also associated with agriculture, but small and private, with its increasing commercialization, which is possible in the areas that have preserved human resources, or which were able to attract and retain workers. However, according to polls, in the periphery of the non-black soil territories, percentage of households willing to engage into commodity or semi-commodity production with some support and assistance in marketing, is about 14% [Nefedova, 2008b]. The main factor, in addition to human capital, here is the degree of involvement in the area of economic

relations system (accessibility and availability of wholesale and retail markets and other users, including truckers).

The third option is related to the cease of single-functional agricultural development of rural areas, sometimes accompanied by a noticeable change in the specialization of the area, with tax and credit incentives for activities associated with the use of natural resources, forests, and water (small timber and wood processing enterprises, procurement and processing of mushrooms and berries, hunting, tourism, etc.). The population most often chooses the easiest way, i.e., gathering. Some families, when season comes, go to forest every day as if they were going to work. When large amounts of mushrooms and berries are available and transport infrastructure is sufficient, dealers will certainly find such places and come there every day during the season. Local people also sell berries along the roads to drivers as well as to cottagers.

The fourth option is for small towns and villages, not only having precious historical and cultural monuments, but also having preserved traditional buildings and located in scenic areas. Their development as places of interest can be promoted by special legislation at the national, regional, or district level. And although this practice in Russia is extremely low, even a little extra funding would help preserve the appearance of many villages and farms of their people, as well as man-made landscapes in general, at least around the villages, churches, etc.

If, however, only old people continue living in villages, there arises a need for special social support. Depopulated villages are, essentially, cheap homes for the elderly, some of who can procure food by themselves. However, they need mobile shops, affordable medical care, regular bus routes that reach to all living villages in the neighborhood. Creating such infrastructure can provide additional jobs in the local centers.

NEW WAYS OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE PERIPHERAL AREAS OF THE NON-BLACK-SOIL TERRITORIES

Real momentum for maintaining development of the peripheral areas of the non-black soil territories comes from big cities and is associated with summer cottagers who revitalize the village. Large cities residents' willingness to travel has increased with the car-buying boom. The phenomenon of the far cottages (dachas) in quiet secluded spots instead of the near cottages or structures sandwiched among hedges and apartment houses is becoming more and more common among residents of Moscow and St. Petersburg whose suburban areas connect to each other in the Novgorod region near Lake Valdai (Fig. 3).

Here is an example of the suburban communities in Ugory settlement in the periphery of the Kostroma region which is located as far as 550 km from Moscow [Nefedova, 2008b]. The fewer locals are in the village, the greater the share of houses purchased there by the residents of the cities. In the main node of the settlement, cities residents make up to 30% of the real estate owners; in two adjacent villages with 30–40 local residents, the share of dachas is about 40%; in the dying small villages, it is as much as 70–90% (Table 1). There are also completely deserted villages. There are also places of interest to summer vacationers. When all local residents leave for the winter, plunder in the houses begins. Life of urban residents without support of locals in such remote locations is not possible; so these two communities are closely linked and interdependent.

Country communities in remote areas began to take shape in the 1970s and 1980s spontaneously. The dachas boom has been recorded since the mid-1990s and in the 2000s. These communities are dominated by the citizens of the middle and older age, of the middle-class, and of mostly intellectual professions, partly because of their tastes, as well as because of their relatively free labor regime. Initially, it was characterized by the

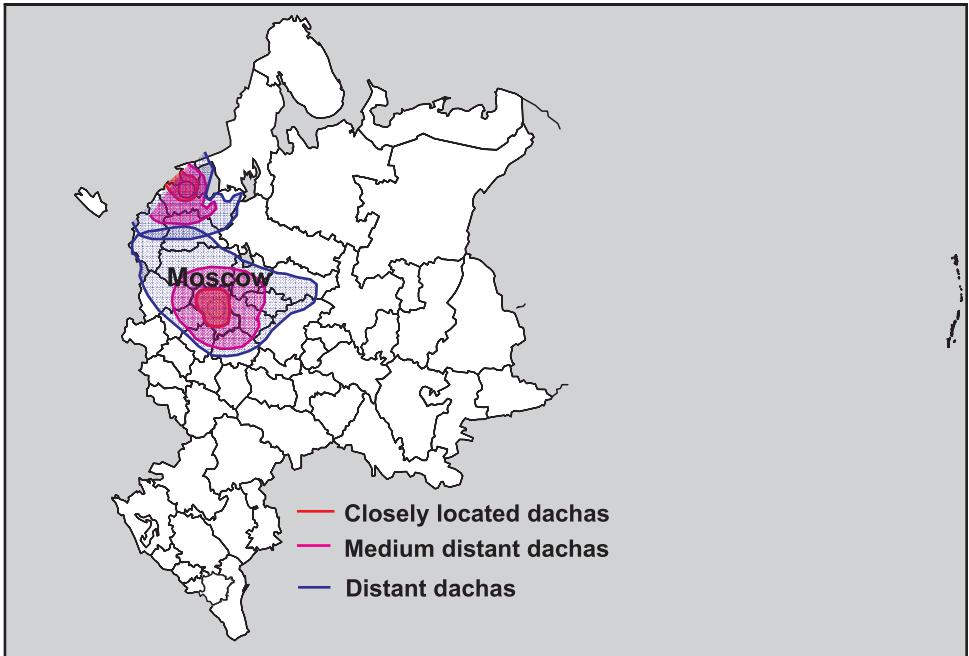


Fig. 3. Area of summer cottages (dachas) expansion around Moscow and St. Petersburg within non-black soil territories

formation of occupational clusters: villages of scientists, artists, journalists, teachers, etc. Subsequently, narrow professionalism has eroded. A survey showed that about

85% of cottagers, even at such a distance from Moscow, are Moscovites. Many young and middle-aged residents of local regional centers come to their parents on weekends

Number of inhabitants of summer cottages and their share in the rural population of Ugory rural settlement (Manturovo municipality, the Kostroma region)

	Number of residents in 2007	Population in 2007 as percentage of 1926	Number of agricultural plots belonging to the locals	Number of agricultural plots belonging to inhabitants of summer cottages	Percentage of summer cottages inhabitants of local population
Ugory	227	34	99	46	32
Davydovo	40	10	16	14	47
Medvedevo	10	5	4	15	79
Hlyabishino	59	14	31	20	39
Dmitrievio	10	4	1	12	92
Zashilskoe	6	5	5	12	71
Bazhino	0	0	0	7	100
Poloma	10	9	4	12	75
Stupino	2	2	1	10	91
TOTAL	386	14	175	161	48

and on vacation; they bring children out of school to live there for summer months; and they are also, in essence, summer residents. However, after death of their parents, they often sell the house in the village, because they live almost in similar conditions in the town.

Summer residents, at this point, do not build new houses and buy relatively strong rural houses. To distinguish between a dacha cottage and a house of a local resident, vegetable gardens can be a criterion. Summer residents are generally not engaged in agriculture, except for mowing grass and planting of ornamental plants. Townspeople come once or twice a year for periods ranging from weeks to several months. Covering the distance by a car can take 8 to 9 hours; by train – a night. Some pensioners live in their cottages all summer. Cottagers gather mushrooms and berries in the woods and go fishing. Many continue doing their professional jobs while in the countryside. But the main occupation is improvement of the country house, while maintaining their almost unchanged appearance. Therefore, even when the village population changes, the village itself retains its traditional look.

Summer residents feel like a kind of a diaspora and try to support each other even in different villages, forming a new social environment. They prefer different lifestyle than locals and find it hard to fit into the local community. Individual local residents work part time for cottagers repairing their houses. But finding workers is not easy. Regardless of high unemployment, there are very few of those who are ready to do carpentry or mow grass for cottagers. Some of the locals sell potatoes and other vegetables to cottagers.

In the Novgorod region, agricultural use of land is being changed by cottage recreational use. Demand for land in the most picturesque villages on the banks of rivers and lakes is particularly high; distant dachas areas of Moscow and St. Petersburg converge and intersect at Valdai. In villages dying according

to official statistics, there are whole streets of brand new houses [Ioffe et al., 2006].

Despite the already considerable period of cottage settlement in the non-black soil zone, the municipal, regional, and especially federal government, are not ready for this innovation. Their mentality is very conservative. Local authorities are still hoping that the federal government “will come to their senses”, or a miraculous business enterprise will come and restore extensive agriculture. Regional and district authorities do not perceive summer seasonal population as their own and are not interested in maintaining a permanent infrastructure for their sake; but even if they wanted to, they lack the funds. As a result, settlement does not create a stable network of services. The programs of rural development designed by regional and federal authorities do not mention cottagers.

However, the role of such development away from urban areas, not just in the suburbs, is clearly underestimated. The mass nature of the Russian seasonal cottage suburbanization is not recorded statistically, since people tend not to leave cities for permanent residence and buy houses in the rural areas in addition to their city apartments. Thus, the total number of summer visitors cannot be determined. Research of these settlements is possible only by tedious case studying of individual villages.

CONCLUSIONS

Thus, the end of the XX and the beginning of the XXI centuries are characterized by increasing economic polarization present in the rural areas of Russia, both during the crisis of the 1990s and during recovery from it. Selective recovery from the crisis is evident and gives a clear idea of which regions in Russia can be a sound base for agriculture. Focuses of agricultural production and investments are concentrated in the South, around big cities and their suburbs, as well as in some national republics, which have retained the employment potential. It is this process of territorial division of labor and of adjustment of agricultural production to existing natural,

human resources, and investment conditions that can ensure improved food security. However, it exacerbates the problem of survival of agriculture and rural communities in many parts of the non-black soil territories, especially in the peripheral areas.

A consequence of long-term rural depopulation in the interior non-black soil territories is negative social selection of the population that has been developing there. Attempts to stop the process of socio-demographic decline of the rural non-black soil territories fail. Globalization, or rather its informational component, only reinforces this process by destroying the archaic order of life and by minimizing the isolation of villages. Nowadays, high-school graduates no longer continue living in the countryside and are not attracted by higher salaries of free houses in the periphery. Globalization pushed economic criteria into the background, putting forward the problem of the lack of the social environment in the periphery very needed by young people.

Depopulation and negative social selection have created a shortage of quality labor force, often with its quantitative abundance associated with the lack of formal jobs as a result of the crisis. The entrepreneurial activity of local people in outlying areas is low. For the partial conservation of the old-developed territories and for expansion of their functions, the primary measure is to create conditions for the return of migrant workers to the periphery. The main

problem there is to promote other activities in addition to agriculture.

The economic model of “economic contraction” accompanied by decrease in agricultural land is inevitable, but it will prevent a total catastrophe for the old-developed territories. Maintenance of existing centers of life is essential at least to maintain social control over a vast territory, “complete savagery” of which is fraught with unpredictable consequences. The main task of the state in conditions of imminent economic polarization, is to mitigate, rather than to reinforce social differences and to maintain social infrastructure in rural areas, including areas where agriculture is dying while the population remains significant in number.

One of the ways to revive the non-black soil rural areas is based on cottagers’ revival of the periphery. Cottagers and local communities are closely interconnected and interdependent. Although the cottagers cannot save extensive agriculture, they are the force which preserves individual rural houses and even entire villages from dying out. Cottagers’ demand for food produced on individual plots of the locals and demand for the locals’ labor to repair houses binds local workforce to their localities. However, the most important influence of the cottagers on the local environment is that they, at least seasonally, create such social environment in depopulating villages that can help binding the local youth to their homes. ■

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