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Problems of the transborder spatial planning in the North-West of Russia

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Problems of trans-border spatial planning in North-West Russia

Absrtact

Trans-border regions are developing in the conditions of globalisation. The optimisation of spatial organisation of economy, social sphere, and nature management using the tools of spatial planning is fully justified in the case of trans-border regions as well as in that of national ones.

In Russia, the term “spatial planning” is widely used to describe a type of planning that also includes strategic planning. The corresponding system of documents is being developed at the federal, regional, and municipal levels. Functional zones are identified in accordance with the prospective use of the territory (industrial, agricultural, recreational, conservational, etc.). At the same, the key provisions of strategic planning documents are taken into account. There is an opportunity for joint development of such documents in collaboration with neighbouring regions and municipalities but not with those of neighbouring countries, however, the latter can be reasonable in the case of Russian border regions.

Russian regions situated in the Baltic take an active part in trans-border cooperation, however, not in the field of spatial planning. The Baltic region has vast experience in developing joint programmes aimed at coordinating activities of EU countries undertaken in this field. This experience, as well as spatial planning innovations (for instance, German landscape planning) can be adopted in Russia.

Introduction

Territorial planning was well developed in the Soviet Union. A general plan was devised for the deployment of Soviet productive forces. District planning concepts and town plans were devised for the whole territory of the country. Each region had a design and engineering institute, the largest of which were

concentrated in Moscow and Leningrad. However, after the collapse of the USSR, throughout the 1990s, works in this field virtually ceased; most of public design organisations were closed down, some of their employees established private design and engineering companies serving commercial needs. Only in the beginning of the 2000s, the development of territorial planning documents resumed in Russia.¹

The adoption of 2004 Urban Development Code stimulated the development of territorial planning; today, the documents, whose preparation is required by the Code, are developed in all regions and many municipalities (although, they are of varying quality). One of the ways to improve them is to take into account the specific features of border regions – up to the development of joint documents with international neighbours (at first, on the basis of initiatives and bilateral agreements and later, possibly, through introducing amendments to the Urban Development Code of the Russian Federation).

In the Baltic region, the EU-Russia trans-border cooperation is developing rather rapidly. However, joint projects are not carried out in the field of spatial planning, although the EU states are implementing programmes aimed at coordinating spatial planning programmes in the region. Russian participation in such projects (for example, VASAB) is reduced to minimum. However, the coordination of spatial planning documents and development of joint projects for Russian border regions and neighbouring countries would be beneficial for both parties.

Spatial planning in Russia

¹ One of the first documents was the Concept for spatial planning in the Kaliningrad region developed in 2003 by the Kaliningrad regional Department for Construction and Architecture, Russian Institute of Urban Development and Investment (Moscow), Belarusian Research and Design Institute of Urban Development (Minsk), and Kaliningrad State University. The author of the article also participated in its preparation. The application of advanced techniques ensured that the Concept was awarded the first prize by the Russian Federal Agency for Construction, Housing, and Utilities and a silver medal at an international exhibition in London.

In Russia, so called “territorial planning” is one of two types of spatial planning, the other type being strategic planning. These two types of spatial planning have certain common grounds but are developed within individual and independent documents. The preparation of territorial planning documents is supervised by the Ministry of Regional Development of the Russian Federation.

Both “strategic” and “territorial” planning are a far cry from the national economy planning of the past, thus one can agree with the authors who use new terminology to refer to the phenomena. In the first case, the notion of “strategising” is sometimes used. In the second case, it would be more accurate to speak not of “regional planning” (as it was the case earlier), but merely of functional zoning. Thus, there is little sense in trying to bring together these two types of activities and documents – the strategic plans of territorial development and territorial schemes (although their harmonisation is necessary). The same holds true for the attempts to expand their content following the example of earlier documents developed in line with the requirements of an administrative command system.

Each of them fulfils a certain role in justifying regional policies. They only show the *conditions for object deployment* but do not present a plan (in the best case, they contain scenarios, i.e. probability forecasts) of their actual localization. Only major trajectories of development and deployment of industrial and social infrastructure financed by the state and municipalities are outlined with an approximation to the future conditions.

Spatial planning is regulated by the Urban Development Code of the Russian Federation (2004) at the federal, regional, and municipal levels. The Code identifies the functional zones, zones of prospective localisation of permanent structure for public and municipal use, and special purpose zones.

At the federal level, territorial planning concepts are developed in the fields of federal transportation, defence and national security, energy, higher education, and healthcare as well as in other fields on the basis of presidential and governmental decrees. Territorial planning concepts for constituent entities are prepared at the regional level.

Municipal territorial planning concepts and general plans of urban districts are prepared at the municipal level.

According to the Urban Development Code of the Russian Federation, the preparation of territorial planning documents is based on strategies or development programmes for specific sectors of economy, priority national projects, socioeconomic development programmes for constituent entities, municipal development plans and programmes, and intergovernmental programmes. It ensures coordination between territorial and strategic development documents.

In certain cases, the Urban Development Code provides the opportunity for joint preparation of documents by two or more constituent entities or municipalities of the Russian Federation. However, it does not even mention the possibility of joint development of documents with the regions or municipalities of neighbouring countries. Nevertheless, the need for such documents is evident in Russian border regions, which belong, as a rule, to the country's periphery and have fewer competitive advantages than the central ones.

Border and trans-border regions

Globalisation, as, probably, today's most important worldwide process, contributes to the unification of world space and intensification of communication and, simultaneously, increases regionalisation. The *territories* that, either accidentally or purposely, turn into *regions* with close internal connections gain additional competitive advantages. They are characterised by a more rapid and integrated development of the economy and social sphere, innovations, and sustainable territorial development. As a result, the regions that exploit the available resources most efficiently develop more rapidly than the others, which increases polarisation in the world.

Regions can be divided into several types depending on their qualitative features affecting the areas and pace of development. The famous classification by J. Friedmann distinguishes between the following types of regions: core regions, upward transitional regions (development corridors), resource frontier regions, and

downward transitional regions [8]. This classification is based on the well-known core-periphery concept, which suggests that regional polarisation increases at all territorial levels. According to this concept, the peripheral, i.e. border territories, are more likely to become downward transitional regions, whereas cooperation between countries and border regions of different countries is most efficient, when each of them demonstrates a high level of economic development. At the same time, border territories of two neighbouring countries that are rich in different but complementary resources can become new growth poles through developing trans-border cooperation. According to the concept of growth triangles, the maximum effect is achieved when a joint strategy is being implemented by three border regions, each of which has a certain type of resources – natural, human, or financial (and/or technological) one [10].

Border regions are often classified as downward transitional, since they are disadvantageously situated within the national market space. However, strong international connections, first of all, those between the core and upward transitional regions and their counterparts from neighbouring countries result in the emergence of special types of border regions catering for these connections – international development corridors [12]. In Russian North-West, such regions are represented, first of all, by Saint Petersburg and the Leningrad region and the Kaliningrad region. The contiguous territories of foreign states are also classified as international development corridors.

From the perspective of the system approach, which is widely used in regional studies, administrative units and municipalities involved in spatial planning serve as territorial socioeconomic systems. Therefore, it is necessary identify, firstly, the elements of the system and, secondly, the connections between them. Globalisation, which started gaining pace in the end of the 20th century, contributes to the expansion and development of different (economic, political, cultural, etc.) connection between objects constituting the elements of territorial socioeconomic system. T. Friedman emphasises that the main question in the era of globalization is to what extent you are connected with everyone else [7]. The

focus of territorial system studies has shifted from nodes and cores (system elements) to the connections between them. Clusters and complexes represent spatially localised networks. The prevalence of horizontal connections results in the formation of clusters, vertical connections create complexes. Clusters are a definite sign of a market economy, whereas complexes develop within administrative command ones.

Regions develop as a result of interactions between economic, social, and political agents, i.e. due to the emergence of stronger connections between them. International regions that serve as development corridors between neighbouring countries include, first of all, economic entities that are linked by close economic ties that are aimed at supporting transit between the countries rather than catering for the needs of the border regions. Therefore, political interactions between the authorities and political organisations of neighbouring countries, as well as cultural ties between educational, research, healthcare, sports, and cultural institutions, also become closer. Trans-border connections develop on the basis of equality, i.e. are horizontal. They ensure the formation of international clusters localised as industrial and cross-industry international clusters and, as a result, that of a territorial system in the form of a trans-border region – an international network embracing the whole territory of cooperating border regions of neighbouring countries.

Thus, not all contiguous border territories of neighbouring countries are trans-border regions. In general terms, they can be called trans-border territories. Only if the connections between neighbouring regions become sufficiently close and significant for the functioning of each border region, one can speak of the development of a trans-border region. Such regions emerge when the neighbouring regions serve as international development corridors. However, they can also emerge in other cases, for instance, when the regions on both sides of the border strive to develop cross-border cooperation. A good example is the trans-border region that emerged astride the Russian-Finnish border in Karelia and the bordering Finnish regions.

The formation of trans-border region is part of the overall regionalisation process, which is understood as the emergence of compact territories tied together by strong internal connections (so called coherent regions).² Transnational mega- and macroregions develop as a result of cooperation between states, transnational corporations, and international organisations. Trans-border regions are a product of cooperation between administrative entities of neighbouring countries (mesoregions) or their municipalities (microregions), and commercial and non-profit organisations that develop numerous connections forging an integrated region (table 1).

Table 1

Hierarchy of international regions

Level	Example
Global level	World political system
Transnational megaregions	EU, CIS, OAS, African Union, Arab League
Transnational macroregions	Union State of Russia and Belarus, Baltic region, Benelux, Baltic states
Trans-border mesoregions	Euroregions
Trans-border microregions	Territories of two cooperating municipalities

Developed trans-border regions regularly function within a certain legal framework of relations between the administrative units and municipalities of the neighbouring countries. Usually, it is an international cooperation agreement. In the most advanced cases, the partners establish an association with special permanent administrative bodies, which sometimes has a status of corporation.

The following stages of trans-border cooperation are usually identified:

- local cross-border contacts;
- interaction between administrative units and municipalities of different countries (in the framework of sister city agreements, interregional cooperation agreements, etc.);

² For more detail see [3]

— implementation of trans-border projects in different (economic, social, environmental, cultural, etc.) fields by administrative units of different states, which establishes reciprocal ties between the project participants;

— trans-border networking, which suggests interaction between actors of different levels on both sides of the border; trans-border regions emerge at this stage.

The features of internal and external trans-border connections make it possible to indentify different forms of corresponding territorial socioeconomic systems as new forms of international economic integration. At the macrolevel, it is large regions, growth triangles, mega-corridors, coastal trans-border zones. Mesolevel is represented by Euroregions, development corridors, and Scandinavian groups. Trans-border industrial districts, trans-border clusters, and polycentric border regions belong to the microlevel.³ All of them serve as the cores of meso- and microregions developing around them.

Unlike internal regions that form within one country, trans-border regions usually demonstrate weaker connections between their parts belonging to different countries in comparison to those between the neighbouring regions within one country. However, all of them shape the internal structure of economy and the features of social life of border regions, but, in some cases (for instance, those of international regions serving as development corridors), they also determine the role of the region in the national territorial division of labour.

EU-Russia cooperation in the Baltic macroregion and spatial planning improvement

Unfortunately, the last decade has not seen any significant progress in the development of Russia-EU relations, although certain steps have been made in the framework of trans-border cooperation in the Baltic. The most significant ones are the Russian-Polish agreement on local border traffic between the Kaliningrad region and the neighbouring Polish territories and the beginning of the

³ For more detail see [9].

implementation of cross-border cooperation programmes within the Interreg IVb projects.

As to the organisation of spatial planning on trans-border territories at the Russian-EU borders, it is reasonable to adopt the experience of EU countries, which are implementing the VASAB programme aimed at carrying out international spatial planning projects in the Baltic region, where a number of Russian constituent entities are situated. Spatial planning issues can become an important component of the activities of the Council of Baltic Sea States. There is a remarkable case of adopting German landscape planning practices in the Kaliningrad region.⁴

Today, trans-border cooperation that is developing in North-West Russia is taken into account by border regions and municipalities only when devising strategic planning documents. There are no examples of joint project development by Russia and EU countries or Belarus, nor are there those of addressing spatial planning documents developed in the neighbouring countries. A formal obstacle is the absence of a law on cross-border cooperation in Russia, although it has been discussed for many years.

However, numerous opportunities for the development and implementation of joint spatial planning projects between north-west Russian regions and the neighbouring countries have been identified and explored. However, Russian participation in the VASAB programme is rather limited, whereas, in the Interreg IV (2007-2013) programme implemented in the framework of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (Interreg IVa – the Baltic Sea region), Russian organisations take part only as associate members. However, Russia participates in cross-border cooperation programmes and co-finance projects within the Interreg IVb programme (Kolarctic, Karelia, South-East Finland/Russia, Estonia/Latvia/Russia, Poland/Lithuania/Russia – sixty projects including 7 large infrastructure projects with a total funding of 135 million euros [23]). Another prerequisite for further development of joint projects is the 9 Euroregions and

⁴ For more detail see [1].

similar structures. Of certain significance is the launch of local border traffic between Russia (Kaliningrad region) and the adjacent Polish voivodeships.

There are a number of concrete proposals developed by scholars from Russia, Poland, Finland and the Baltics in the course of both national and international projects. They include the formation of South Baltic and East Baltic growth triangles (U. Kivikari [10, 11]), the creation of Tricity bipolar territorial system (Gdansk – Gdynia – Sopot) – Kaliningrad (T. Palmowski [21]) and a tripolar system that would include Klaipeda and contribute to the development of production functions of Euroregions (G.M. Fedorov, Yu.M. Zverev, V.S. Korneevets [5, 14]), the development of trans-border clusters astride the Russia-EU border (A.S. Mikhailov [20]), joint use of the resources of the Vistula and Curonian Lagoons and their coast by Russia, Poland, and Lithuania (E.G. Kropinova [17]), the improvement of forms of trans-border cooperation (A.P. Klemeshev, N.M. Mezheich, N.Yu. Oding, Ya. Zaukha, A.A. Sergunin, etc. [2, 6, 13, 18, 19, 23, 24]), the formation of trans-border regions (Korneevets V.S., Fedorov G.M. [4, 15, 16]), etc.

In the framework of Euroregions – even in the absence of a corresponding legal framework – the preparation of joint spatial planning projects within the new 2014-2020 cross-border cooperation programme would be rather beneficial for the development of border regions of the neighbouring countries and improvement of national documents. However, until a legal cooperation framework in the field of spatial planning is created, it seems to be more efficient for Russian border regions to include recommendations on the development of joint trans-border projects into the strategic and territorial planning documents of the federal, regional, and municipal levels.

Conclusions

General conclusions relating to solving the problems of trans-border spatial planning in North-West Russia can be formulated as follows:

1. The formation of trans-border regions through the active development of reciprocal connections between border regions of neighbouring countries contributes to an increase in their competitiveness and sustainable development. Thus, the constituent entities of the Russian Federation situated in the Baltic should take an active part in implementing programmes and projects aimed at the development of international cooperation and trans-border regions with EU partners.

2. Further development of mutually beneficial trans-border cooperation requires the adoption of a federal law on cross-border cooperation.

3. An important factor would be the adoption of a new framework agreement between Russia and the EU that would replace the PCA, which expired in 2007.

4. There is a need to develop a special federal target programme for support for trans-border cooperation and allocate sufficient funds for its implementation.

5. Another contribution will be the introduction of amendments to the Urban Development Code of the Russian Federation, as a result of which spatial planning documents of Russian border regions would contain recommendations on developing cooperation with neighbouring foreign regions in the course of preparing territorial scheme (especially in the case of functional zoning) and general plans.

6. There is a need to adopt best international practices when developing spatial planning documents, in particular, the achievements of German landscape planning.

7. The implementation of spatial planning projects by neighbouring border regions constituting a transnational region will contribute to the development of international industrial cooperation within them, closer cooperation in the social sphere, and rational nature management. There is a need for a more active use of the opportunities of the of the Council of Baltic Sea States, EU programmes and foundations with Russian participation, projects of Russian research foundations

with international participation, Euroregion initiatives, and international cooperation agreements.

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