

THE SECTION 1

REGIONAL FORMS OF THE POST-SOCIALIST SUBURBAN REVOLUTION

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“POST-SOCIALIST SUBURBAN REVOLUTION” AND SUBURBAN STUDIES IN RUSSIA

Russian suburbanization, diverse in its content due to the regional diversity of the country, can be extremely interesting and useful for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of the so-called "post-socialist suburban revolution" and its regional forms. At the same time, the suburbs of major Russian cities and the suburban lifestyle in their different regional manifestations remain poorly studied despite the impressive prospects for comparative and generalizing analysis. In the field of "suburban studies", which is just beginning to develop in Russia, about 10 specialists are working today (mainly geographers, sociologists, historians) from several regions of the country. Their tasks include the construction of a common subject field, setting research goals, searching for "working" concepts for the analysis and understanding of Russian data, critical analysis of the research source base, collection and systematization of regional material, typology and generaliza-

tion of regional cases, inclusion of research results in international discussions.

Keywords: urbanisation, suburbanisation, suburbs, Russia, suburban studies.

The growing debate on the phenomenon of the "post-socialist suburban revolution" [Staniĭlov, Sykora 2014], which is developing particularly productively today in research centers in Eastern Europe, forms an important request for Russian regional studies of (sub)urbanization beyond Moscow and St. Petersburg. The multiformity of Russian (sub)urbanization associated with regional economic inequality, differences in the social structure of urban communities, climate, local cultural, including architectural traditions, etc. already suggests wide opportunities for concretization of the phenomenon ("suburban revolution"), clarification of its sources, forms, consequences, etc. in different parts of the "post-socialist world". What is the situation with suburban studies in Russia?

Two years ago, in June 2017 there was the all-Russian scientific seminar "What do we know about modern Russian suburbs?", in which Russian researchers-urbanists had the opportunity to discuss the results of their work, also to identify the most important issues for them related to the subject field of suburban studies [What do we know ... 2017]. Taking into account that the field itself and the community of researchers interested in the issues of suburbanization are only developing in our country, the agenda was simple, at first glance. What are the scales and sources of suburban growth in modern Russia? What is the social and academic significance of suburban studies? Why should we study the suburbs? What can be the Russian definition of suburbs? What foreign approaches to their study can be particularly useful to us? Is there an effective practice of suburban development management in Russia? How, by what methods do Russian researchers study suburbs? In which regions have suburban studies been conducted, and in which-not yet? These, far from prosaic questions, were and remain important for every Russian researcher who aims to promote his research program, to include the results of his work in the national and international discussions.

On the treshhold of the seminar in 2017 I prepared an overview of the works / research programs related to the study of the suburbs of large cities in modern Russia. The review is published in the introductory article of the collection [Breslavsky 2017]. I have to note here that in the period from

2000 to 2016 according to the data of the Russian electronic scientific library RSCI comprehensive field research in the field of suburban development was conducted only in 7 Russian cities out of 79, the population of each was more than 250 thousand people (in 2016). These are cities such as Irkutsk, Kaluga, Krasnoyarsk, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Tyumen, Ulan-Ude. 7 cities out of 79, i.e. that is less than 9 %. Over the past two years thanks to the work of Shchepetkova I. O. Perm has been added to these cities [2019]. In several other cities narrowly focused, but not comprehensive suburban studies have been conducted. It is important to note that the authors discussed in the 2017 review have largely continued to work within their themes.

In general, the inattention of researchers to the suburbs of large cities is somewhat discouraging, considering the importance large cities and urban agglomerations acquire today in the economy and settlement system in the country. In the list, as we can see, there is no majority of cities-millionaires of Russia (Novosibirsk, Yekaterinburg, Chelyabinsk, Kazan, etc.), not to mention the smaller urban agglomerations and cities. Despite the small quantitative growth and professionalization of urban research in the country in the last decade, suburbs receive attention only from individual "enthusiasts". It is characteristic that over the past 15 years among all dissertations in sociology, geography and economics, there was only one defended with the word "suburb" in its name [Grigoriev 2014]. Although the concept of "suburbs" and "suburban territories" has been defined in our academic dictionaries for a long time [Suburb 2019], it seems to be poorly demanded and instrumentally understood by those who study cities, settlement systems, territorial planning, etc. in Russia. Only 3 author's monographs on the materials of research of suburbs of large Russian cities have been published so far [Grigoriev 2013; Breslavsky 2014; Kazakova 2017].

At the same time, it is suburban areas in Russia which are becoming the main platform for urban development now (since land and infrastructural resources of the central urban areas are limited, and the cities themselves often do not provide a comfortable environment for living). Ignoring this fact will not be allowed at least because of the continued growth of the population of the largest cities. This applies not only to Moscow and St. Petersburg, other rapidly growing cities in Russia such as Tyumen and Krasnodar, but also to many regional centers which continue to attract intraregional population. Even in those urban agglomerations and large cities where the

combination of natural and migration growth does not give positive indicators, the processes of (re)arrangement of suburban areas can and do occur intensively.

Unfortunately, because of the weakness of Russian statistics and the small number of regional studies we cannot speak more specifically about the sources of suburban growth in Russia as a whole, about the role of urbanization and suburbanization in these processes. But despite the notable differences between cities in some regions of the country, today we can still identify the main segments of their suburban areas, indicate (with reservations) the extent of their ongoing changes [Mkrtchyan 2018], point to the current and possible consequences of these changes. However, without regional studies of Russian suburbs, the history of their formation, the definition of their essential features and characteristics, without studying the sources of their growth and development, population migration and settlement systems linking villages-suburbs-cities, without understanding the scale and results of suburban growth, etc. – without all this we can't get the further development of our subject area.

It seems to be the right time now to start exploring the suburbs. On the one hand, such studies are not conducted in more than 70 major cities in Russia at all, on the other hand, the country's economy and its population are increasingly concentrated in cities. Spontaneous development of suburban areas, inattention to these processes from the regions and the state as a whole can result in many negative consequences, the manifestation of which is only a matter of time. The concentration of poverty in the suburbs of large cities, problems with employment, law and order, the implementation of municipalities powers, environmental and transport problems are becoming more considerable. The peculiarities of Russian taxation, the budget code, the law on local self-government, the weakness of inter-municipal cooperation often become barriers in solving these problems. Not always regional and municipal authorities have sufficient, complete data, making decisions in the field of infrastructural, socio-economic and demographic development of suburban areas. All this forms the public agenda of suburban studies.

From an academic point of view, the study of the "Russian field" is significant not only for the development of domestic urbanism, the assertion of its social status, but also for the expanding international discussions in the field of suburban studies, which include more and more research in the developing and post-socialist world since the early 2000s. We still have a

chance to answer this request. In the current environment much will depend on regional researchers, their initiative and interest in the subject field of suburban research.

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