



Socio-economic Transformations in Moscow Oblast: Impacts on its Spatial Structure

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During the past several years close attention of Moscow geographers is being attracted to transformation process in Moscow Metropolitan Region (MMR). The interest is quite justified by the outstanding role of this region in Russian Federation. It accumulates 10 per cent of the population of the RF, more than 60 per cent of Russian finances. Many of socio-economic transformational processes, innovated here, come to be reproduced later in other regions of the country. One could name the Moscow agglomeration "the test-laboratory" in the market transition process.

But most of geographical researches refer to the core of agglomeration - Moscow itself. The peripheral part of the region - Moscow Oblast (MO) - is far less investigated. Never the less it is important to know what socio-economic changes take place here, what new functions perform this part of the agglomeration within the intraregional division of labor?

Analyzing its employment structure can identify function profile of a region:

- the well known fact is, that the employment structure in Moscow Oblast is more "industrialized" than that of Moscow. Many dirty and "not prestige" industries - chemicals, textile, building materials and building constructions etc. - find a place in towns and settlements of MO. The industry occupied in 1996 30,2 per cent of all economically employed persons in MO compare to 17,5 per cent in Moscow. In 1990 this indicator was much higher - 37,6 per cent. Both the industrial production and industrial employment in MO are being reduced since 1990 rapidly:

- the next distinctive feature of the MO employment structure is the high percentage of "education and science" - 17 per cent of labor forces.

It is as much as for Moscow (the absolute volume for Moscow is certainly - about 900 thousands persons; it is three times more than in MO). But this function of MO is also diminishing rapidly: many of the wells known "science- towns" in Moscow suburbs (Troitsk, Chernogolovka, Pakhra, etc.) have lost their potentials significantly. It is worth to mention here, that the only type of science-centers, settled in MO, which did not lose their personnel are so called "closed-towns" (4 settlements). It is impossible here to give a correct estimate of their potentials because of the scarcity of open statistics and information, but they surely from an important background for the scientific- innovation complex of Moscow Metropolitan Region.

- the third place in the employment structure occupies the agriculture (7 per cent). The branch does not belong to "specialization" for the MO. But the half of dairy products and vegetables, 25 per cent of potatoes, consumed in MMR, are being produced in MO. The food provision of MMR population is based now in major parts on imports from foreign countries and not on supply from other regions of Russia. But contrary to the first two branches the agriculture has not lost so many of job-places. Emerging of new production forms - farming slowed this process down. The number of individual farms in MO increased from 21 in 1991 to 6,601 in 1997.

Not all the functions could be identified through employment structure analysis. An additional important information source is the land- use analysis. Unfortunately the Russian official statistics does not give enough data to land-use, besides the available statistics is too much aggregated. The only way out of this situation is to make an independent field survey. The official statistics for example does

not give figures to areas occupied for waste storing. The field researches of Moscow geographers reveal this function of MO. More than 300 of waste storing areas were traced here... The only from of processing of enormous industrial and domestic wastes coming down here from Moscow and other urban centers are being burned down in the open air, with all the disastrous ecological consequences of it.

Another function which is not followed by official statistics. Widely practiced is the temporary residing of Moscovites and other town-dwellers at their garden-plots and dachas in MO. Geographers collect this information piece by piece. Not less then 4% of the MO area is now put at this disposal.

Also the typical suburbanisation processes are taking place in MO during the last years, specifically in form of so called cottage construction. Up to 1996 geographers observed more then 6000 cottage plots with houses on them. In fact we have the situation when agriculture function is being replaced by settlement-function (dachas, cottage villages). Rural regions in the MO are selling their main resource now - the land. The process is developing under the conditions of spontaneous emerging land market in absence of Land Law in Russia.

On the background of these general socio-economic outlines one should make out the strong special differentiation in the MO area. The differentiating index was estimated for 39 administrative districts of the MO. The index was composed on the basis of selected indicators on demographical (5 indicators), social (4), agricultural production (4 indicators) developments. A belt of densely populated districts with relatively more favorable socio-economic situation in them could be distinguished in the nearest "gravity zone" to Moscow (within a radius of 25-30 km from Moscow). On the map-scheme they are shown as "moderately unsuccessful" and "unsuccessful". This definition results from negative demographical dynamics (negative natural population growth which cannot be compensated anymore by increasing immigration flow), heavy decline of industrial production, stagnation of agricultural production, worsening of criminality (according to Interior Department of Moscow 40% of crimes are being committed by suburbs residents). Exactly within the range of this belt cottage construction and the actual market of suburbs residential real estate are developing rapidly. Contrary to this belt the peripheral districts of MMR are on the deep depression stage. They will not do without special support programs. The outcomes of our comparative statistical analysis and the revealed regional pattern correlate very well to price differentiation of land plots and real estates in the MO.

Finally the significance of complex mutual economic cooperation between Moscow and its nearest environment is to be emphasized here. This cooperation is an enabling factor of transformation process, but also a factor capable to soften the negative impacts of this transformation. Up to now Moscow and the MO are two separate subjects of the Russian Federation with their own administration system, with own programs of economic development, of economic priorities. But up to now Moscow and the Oblast more confronted each other than cooperated. They compete heavily for federal subsidies, for investment programs, etc. It is more than necessary to set aside this artificial division. Moscow geographers - so-called "hard", "soft" propose different scenarios for unification, "blocking". Under the present conditions the soft scenario seems to be more reliable - it supposes the step by step integration with working out some Common Special Programs for development (for example Conversion Program) and Executive Committee for these programs accordingly, foundation of Common Statistical Service, Common Administrative Board elected from representatives of both Moscow and MO administration. Apparently the further progress of transformation could be slowed down in absence of Common Development Conception for Moscow Metropolitan region as a whole.

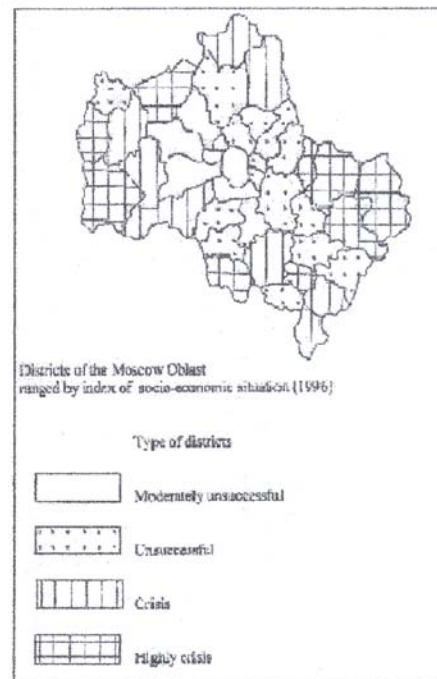


Figure 1. Districts of the Moscow Oblast. Ranged by index of socio-economic situation (1996).

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