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**Cohesion as main target of regional policy in Russia**

By

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**Abstract**

The main term of last decade regional policy is “cohesion». In “Western” countries it is treated as a process, but not the final result (of global equity – very popular idea in Russia). Russian regional policy is also socially oriented and could not be other under the conditions of tremendous spatial differentiations. Cohesion is new “name” for main aim of traditional socially oriented regional policy (social justice and integration of the country or group of countries) at new stage of its development. This stage in EU reflects new regional policy realities – multi level of implementation, target areas in all EU countries, “complex approach”, stress on efficiency. For Russia cohesion regional policy is most suitable one. Russia have several fragments of regional policy, some are oriented on cohesion, but more in papers than in reality. Attempts of EU institution to cooperate in the field with Russia is blocked by Russian side: the latter do not know what is cohesion regional policy but sure that our country do not need it. Only scientific community can improve the situation, providing regularly real information. EU institutions and RSA can initiate such activities

**Key Words:** cohesion, regional development, regional policy, Europe, Russia, Western experience.

**1. Introduction**

Traditionally Russian regional policy was oriented on development of concrete cities, areas, regions, both crisis and relatively prosperous ones. Selection of territorial units was based on ideology, military and political considerations, personal connections, but very rare on

comparison of indicators of all units of the same territorial level. Western approach based on using of non-numerous quantitative indicators were and are much clearer for target population than Russian one, open for “personal” factors. Good example is distribution of Regional Development Fund several years ago, which was used by the Federal authorities to pay for new constitutions of Tataria and Bashkiria and for “subordination” in relations with Federal Centre, but not for the development of crisis regions. Both regions are among “best” in the country and under Western criteria have no chances to receive state help from regional policy funds. These funds were mainly oriented on cohesion measured by GDP per head

Idea of professor Antony Kuklinski on two types of regional policy (socially oriented and economically oriented, i.e. position on equity – efficiency curve) confirmed by the experience both of developed and transitional countries, including Russia. In the world the first type is much more widespread, as only very prosperous and homogeneous countries can “survive” without state help for crisis areas. In all post-socialist countries socially oriented regional policy was under severe critic as non-market approach. But small “falsification” took place: all normal experts in regional policy (in Russia and “ex-allies”) never proposed that regional policy can create similar socio-economic “landscape” on the whole country territory. Aims vary from “stop further increase of spatial socio-economic disproportions” till “small decrease” of latter, i.e. cohesion.

And in developed countries rate of state help in the course of regional policy is limited both by European Union and World Trade Organization as well as prescription of institutional conditions under which this help can be provided. Regional policy is the only official opportunity of state financial intervention in economy.

## **2. Cohesion – what do you mean?**

It is widespread opinion that in “human sciences” there are no places for inventories. But this is not our case. The main term of last decade regional policy is “cohesion». In “Western” countries it is treated as a process, but not the final result (of global equity) – as already mentioned, very popular idea in Russia. In Russian language cohesion has no meanings such as “meeting”, absence of spatial differentiations. The term used to show that positions of two sides became closer but still not similar, any differentiations reduced or relations between two persons or more became better ( but do not include romantic relation and marriage).

Figure 1. Kirov Oblast: density of population

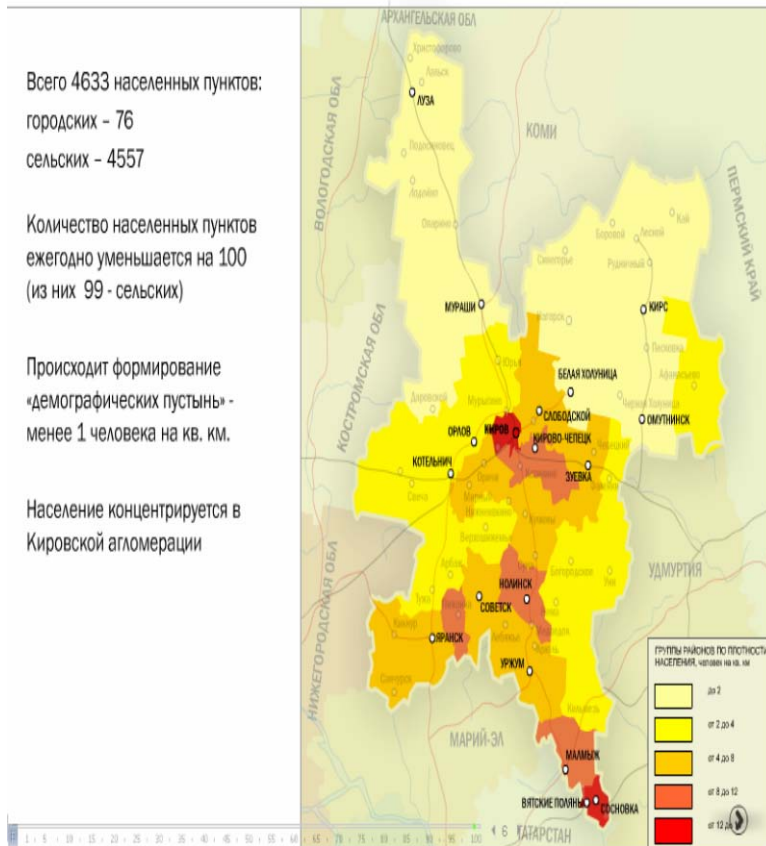
## СИСТЕМА РАССЕЛЕНИЯ

Всего 4633 населенных пунктов:  
городских - 76  
сельских - 4557

Количество населенных пунктов  
ежегодно уменьшается на 100  
(из них 99 - сельских)

Происходит формирование  
«демографических пустынь» -  
менее 1 человека на кв. км.

Население концентрируется в  
Кировской агломерации



Russian regional policy is also socially oriented and could not be other under the conditions of tremendous spatial differentiations: Russia regions/territories varied from natural economy areas to post industrial ones. Scales of the country also predetermine social orientation of regional policy. Russia and EU counties have very similar problem areas but differ greatly by distance between them. In UK (or even EU) one can see old industrial belt, in Russia separated areas which even in one subject of Federation can be separated by hundreds of kilometers (see Figure 1).

Term “cohesion” can also orient regional policy on reduction of areas isolation (or increase on accessibility), both by construction or modernization of transport infrastructure and decrease of tariffs. As result one can see reduction in friction of space. In Russia this approach was used in several peripheral regions, but not only. Good example is Kaliningrad region, now (after end of USSR) Russian enclave in EU.

There are several reasons for Russia to use “cohesion” regional policy:

- it can be used in big and/or federal states which need it on two level;

- European experience is more attractive for Russian population than American or Japanese one;
- regional policy is one of the most open “direction” of state intervention;
- it work for country integration;
- Russian territories have not only quantative but also qualitative differences and this is direct way to country disintegration;
- term can be used in political rhetoric and good base for any compromise

### **3. Growth poles: ideology or instrument.**

Growth poles approach can be regarded as new model of regional policy or as instrument of regional policy. Cohesion ideology does not exclude spatial concentration of state activities. At least in hidden form one can see it practically in all EU regional policy document. But when high rank Russian officials propose to concentrate investments in two capitals and their regions or in 11 biggest cities of the country, this is obviously illustrate level of regional policy implementation and knowledge of own country.

Under the conditions of depopulation of vast areas and permanent westward migration, country needs regional policy of organized retreat from North to the South.. And the same time social economic leveling (Russian equivalent for term cohesion) is under permanent critic as part of socialism and past.

As the result of all mentioned factors, Russian regional policy is non-organized mixture of both regional policies, working in ambulance “regime”)... This prevent Russia from using of western experience. Both sides do not understand each other. “Terminology” problems is one of main obstacles on the route of new regional policy..

In Russia regional policy institutionally includes a lot of things from other directions of state activities. If we take the structure of Ministry of regional development it became obvious that construction and related spheres (water supply, heating of houses ...) are its main responsibilities plus winter Olympic Games 2014. Various directions of regional policy survived independently. And expert community is oriented on “victory at any expense” (and ready to propose new strategy of transborder cooperation in 3 days).

Very common situation when regional policy and town and country planning proposed to be two sides of one coin.

Russia: state in Far East Europe or in Western Asia (barrier or bridge)? It is a pain point for some persons in Russia, but not to such extent as to Georgia or Armenia or Turkey. But this question is also very important for EU countries as the answer predetermines geographical position of Union periphery. This idea is supported, for example by Finland, initiator of many common actions between EU and Russia.

Development of Russia as a bridge between Europe and Asia can be useful both for EU and RF (Russian Federation). But both sides have to create new ways of cooperation, based on facts not on tales. We need fifth common European space – complex social economic, political, ecological and cultural ONE. We need common space in which common people can leave, work and move.

#### **4. Cohesion: change of indicator or in life?**

Term cohesion usually used to show, that analyzed processes go slowly. That is typical for regional development sphere, where time measured in decades. But Russian politician try to find quick decisions. Regions changes need decades and politicians “cycle of life” is 5-10 and they need quick positive results Why work for decades if it possible to change boundaries. Crisis regions become parts of “rich” neighbor, which look after it. But that is not cohesion, but its simulation. Some intermediate conclusions can be done on this state initiative (based on 5 already realized merges):

The merges already carried out had totally zero or even negative effect. Quite probably, that in the future new regions will be required, merges of subjects of Russian Federation will take place. But all these activities have to be within the limits of complex territorial reform, officially approved regional policy, instead of the separate not coordinated actions.

The company on “integration” of subjects (as well as others in the field of management of the Russian space) should show force of the Center, and has shown its weak competence and insufficient professionalism.

Merges have not raised controllability of country space. But once again they show necessity of regional policy adequate to requirements and reforms in adjacent spheres. More attention has to be paid to such category as “distance”. And to interrelations between distance and cohesion.

Continuation of a policy of non-voluntary integration is fraught with all kinds of conflicts – from ecological to ethnic. Especially in case when ethnic subjects of Federations should be included in the process. Present campaign of merges of subjects of the Russian Federation has practically exhausted: tasks in view are not executed; the prestige of the Center in regions has strongly suffered. But nobody can guarantee, that there will be no relapse.

Problems between Federal Center and regions are connected not with big number of subjects of Federation, but with aspiration of federal authorities to regulate everything. De jure our country – federation (with independent local government level), de facto the unitary state (with a vertical of the power which penetrates all territorial levels).

Development of many underdeveloped regions is problem of federal level and efforts of the Center are necessary. The country regional policy cannot be replaced by not coordinated actions, as well as by transfer of Center obligations to the adjacent rather success regions.

To reform of Russian space is possible to address only after achievement of political, economic and social stability in the country.

Government institutes have practically refused from own analytical departments, almost do not use independent consulting, often consider scientific researches as waste of money and time. The persons making decisions poorly know domestic, as well as foreign experience (in sphere of regional development and policy).

##### **5. Growth poles approach: Capital(s) and big cities versus cohesion**

The second type of a regional policy (if use terms, proposed by A.Kuklinski) is also presented in Russian Federation, though and not in the “pure form”. The policy of development and unloading of Moscow is simultaneously directed on rapprochement and strengthening of positions of Moscow as a global city.

The Russian Federation, as already mentioned, has no enough consecutive and full regional policy, but its part which connected with Moscow, is already enough developed. It is directed, first of all, on development of Moscow, both a global city, and high-grade capital of the country, i.e. expansion and maintenance of its communications with own foreland and hinterland. Moscow received and receives from the federal centre (directly or in hidden form) considerable means. Many years it was the separate line in the federal budget: grants to Moscow, for

execution of capital functions (though really Moscow should pay for possibility to be engaged in the specified activity).

The federal authorities are more interested in migration of capacities outside the limits of capital and even its nearest environment. In this case the new areas in the centre are released, and value of the capital earth as a whole raise. In the crisis, certain hopes are assigned for migration of the Moscow industry in crisis mono-cities of Moscow Oblast and adjacent first ring of the Russian federation subjects.

The policy of deindustrialization in Moscow had a number of specific features:

Thus, that its rates were above, than in the majority of regions of the country, the Moscow authorities tried to keep the most prestigious enterprises of the previous industrial epoch.

Authorities of Moscow have concentrated the attention only on inside Moscow migrations. It meant encouragement of migration from the Center to capital periphery, but that could cause numerous environmental problems.

Possibility of cooperation with the Moscow area and subjects of Federation of the first ring of areas (i.e. the Moscow capital region) practically was not used. Developed, practically at same time, general plans of Moscow and the Moscow oblast, practically have not been co-coordinated, not looking that the Moscow area is the most logical placing of industrial "migrants".

Accepted on 10.06.2008 Order of the government of Moscow on the coordination and the statement of the documentation on development of territory, released from industrial use was a basis of a new policy of unloading of city centre from industrial targets at the expense of their carrying out on capital periphery. This policy has come to the place of an uncontrollable industrial migration within capital and, mainly for its limits and selective take on a place to industrial targets.

But new policy of the Moscow authorities is a loss financial features of the Russian federalism: regional and local authorities are strongly limited in the expenditure outside officially controlled territories. It completely contradicts the western experience of a policy of unloading of the largest agglomerations in post-war the period: The last actively financed programs of new and extending cities far outside of the administrative borders, stimulating outflow from them the

population and places of the appendix of work. In the conditions of such restrictions of the power of Moscow are compelled to search for placing places «not prestigious” objects in own borders,

## Conclusions

1. Cohesion is new term for main aim of traditional socially oriented regional policy (social justice and integration of the country or group of countries) at new stage of its development. This stage in EU reflects new regional policy realities – two level of implementation, target areas in all EU countries, “complex approach”, stress on efficiency ...
2. Naturally cohesion can be expressed by quantitative indicators but real results one can see on qualitative level.
3. For Russia cohesion regional policy is most suitable one. It is point for political and experts compromise. But without legalized regional policy Russia has all possibilities to miss them.
4. Russia have several fragments of regional policy, some are oriented on cohesion, but more in papers than in reality.
5. Attempts of EU institution to cooperate in the field with Russia is blocked by Russian side: the latter do not know what is cohesion regional policy but sure that our country do not need it.
6. Only scientific community can improve the situation, providing regularly real information. EU institutions and RSA can initiate such activities