



ГЕОИНФОРМАЦИОННОЕ И КАРТОГРАФИЧЕСКОЕ ОБЕСПЕЧЕНИЕ ЭКОЛОГИЧЕСКИХ, ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКИХ И СОЦИАЛЬНЫХ АСПЕКТОВ УСТОЙЧИВОГО РАЗВИТИЯ ТЕРРИТОРИЙ

GIS AND CARTOGRAPHIC SUPPORT OF ECOLOGICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ASPECTS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF TERRITORIES

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THE RUSSIAN STRATEGY OF SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT: TRENDS AND REALITIES

ABSTRACT

The article deals with cartographic approaches to the analysis of infrastructure development in Russia. Drawing up special map content from diversified sources of information allows for a comprehensive assessment of the effects of the spatial development strategy of the Russian Federation. The map and geodatabase allows spatial monitoring of infrastructure development in the country. The authors describe in detail the possibilities of such analysis based on the classification of types of infrastructure facilities. Based on them, a geodata database was created, which contains information on 9 parameters, including the expected effects of its implementation. The article Provides a detailed analysis of the effects and possible consequences of the implementation of major infrastructure projects in the regional context of the country. The authors conclude that while the creation of infrastructure in Russia is extremely fragmentary. Viewed regions-leaders and regions-outsiders. The difference between them is not only in the availability of the resource base, but also in the peculiarities of the Russian model of federalism.

KEYWORDS: infrastructure mapping, geodatabase, investment potential, thematic mapping, geodatabase

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INTRODUCTION

On February 13th 2019, Prime Minister Dimitri Medvedev promulgated a long-awaited document: the “Strategy for Spatial (Territorial) Development of the Russian Federation by 2025” (“Spatial development strategy of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2025”). This text is part of a broad set of programmatic documents, initiated by the vote, in 2014, of a federal law “On strategical planning in Russia”, and supposed to cover the main axes of Russian medium-term policy. The 115-page document seems to follow directly the great plans of the Soviet era: 68 of these pages are devoted to a detailed list of specializations that it would be useful to develop in the 85 subjects (regions and republics) of the Federation (see fig. 1). However, most experts agree: given the vastness of the Russian territory, the extent of its disparities, the demographic and economic differences that characterize it, it is absolutely necessary that the central authorities establish a coherent framework for both public policies at all levels (federal, regional and local) and for the interventions of private actors.

In nearly twenty years of presidency, Vladimir Putin has largely impressed his mark on geographical or spatial issues. In 2009 as a prime minister, he even became the head of the Russian Geographic Society’s (RGO) board of trustees and appointed S. Shoygu (at that moment Minister of Emergency Situations, now Minister of Defense) its president. This way, Putin demonstrated his high interest in diversity and richness of Russian nature and his will to protect and promote natural and cultural landscapes. At the same time, he was focusing on the poor spatial development of the country and his desire to change it [*Radvanyi*, 2016]. The publication of the Strategy is another way to deal with the territorial issues. How he is doing, and what are the first results of the policy he has undertaken? This is what we will try to demonstrate by relying on a set of new maps made from a specific database. The preparation of the strategy was launched in 2014 but became bogged down in a series of debates and twists. The preparation of the text is relaunched in January 2017 by a decree of President V. Putin “On the Approval of the Foundations of State Policy for Regional Development of the Russian Federation”. In his address to the Parliament in March 2018, he stressed the need to develop a vast program of space development of Russia and at least double the spending that will be devoted to it in the next six years. Projects are beginning to circulate which provoke considerable controversy both in the central administrations concerned and among the experts¹.

Naturally, and this is perfectly understandable considering the size and complexity of the Russian territory, nobody did wait until the 2010’s to worry about these issues. Like the “National Question”, “Regional Policy” is one of the themes that have always been the subject of much debate, articles, books and decisions of all kinds. And yet, despite this superabundant literature, the material situation of the Russian spatial complex remains critical. The “regional policy” (It is not a coincidence if this term is not mentioned once in the Strategy) has never succeeded, at least since Soviet times, in proposing a coherent and effective approach to development. And since the independence of Russia, after the disintegration of the USSR in 1991, many shortcomings have been even accentuated: inter and interregional differences in economic and social development; population disparities increased by the demographic crisis (the downward trend of natural growth) and uncontrolled migratory movements (mainly eastern and northern regions towards the European part); weakness of the urban network marked by the overwhelming dominance of Moscow (city and region); persistent weakness of the structuring elements that should constitute the major transport networks, energy transmission and infrastructure alone able to hoist Russia to the international level to which it claims.

¹ An example of these debates: “The spatial development strategy did not pass the audition”. Kommersant <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3726100> (date of request 28.08.2018)



Fig. 1. Great infrastructural prospects of Russia

As the uncompromising analyses of many Russian authors [e.g. *Kuznetsova, 2019; Zubarevich, 2015, 2017, 2019*] show, “regional policy” has done little more than accompany a series of structural trends related to the Russian economy: the central role of the capital or capitals, if we add Saint Petersburg and its region – boosted by the return of the hyper-centralization; the favored situation of the major commodity-producing regions (primarily hydrocarbons, but also some mining regions or, more rarely, the rich agricultural regions of Southern Europe); the almost neglect of the eastern and northern regions, which have seen their activities and population decline sustainably. The central authorities have tried to correct the most visible aspects of these weaknesses by operating a kind of equalization between “donor regions” (those that contributed more to the federal budget than they received subsidies) and “recipient regions” (IE, the very large majority, whose regional budget was more or less dependent on the allocations of the federal center)¹. But these transfers have always been made in a certain opacity, without being clearly established the rules of their implementation, subject to more or less effective lobbying actions of regional actors and often conducive to the excesses of corruption at different levels. A Russian term often refers to these practices, that of “spontaneity”, that is to say here the absence of a guideline, a kind of improvisation in the sand of necessities.

More recently, specific measures have been decided to address the weaknesses of this regional policy in three strategic and particularly sensitive regions. In June 2012, the Ministry of Development of the Far East was created; in May 2014 the Ministry of North Caucasus Affairs and, in February 2015, the State Commission for Arctic Development [*Seliverstov, 2018*]. But the very necessity of resorting to the creation of specific federal administrations to try to solve regional questions showed how much the current practice was in default.

This is precisely what the new Space Strategy aims to remedy, by presenting a coherent framework for reflection and action that addresses all issues involving a territorial approach. The objectives of the Strategy are stated broadly: “to guarantee a balanced and sustainable spatial development of Russia, to reduce inter-regional disparities in the quality and life of the inhabitants, to accelerate the pace of economic and technological development, national guarantee security”.

Examples of such an approach are not new. One notable example is the remarkable series of reports produced under the direction of Vyacheslav Glazychev in the early 2000s by the Volga district center for Strategic Studies [*Glazychev, 2008*]. Benefiting from a rich experience of regional management throughout the entire Volga region, these reports pointed out the growing Disparities and the crucial question of a better control of the population and therefore of the labor resources. They emphasized the need to deal with different aspects of the reality of the territories together. From 2014, these issues come back to the center of the debate. In his address to the parliament of 2018 already quoted, V. Putin set some rules: “The dynamic life, active Russia, on its huge territory, cannot concentrate in a few megacities. The big cities must spread their energy, serve as a support for a harmonious, balanced spatial development of all Russia. For this, modern infrastructures are absolutely essential. It is the boom in communications that will enable the inhabitants of small towns and villages to access all the contemporary services that exist in the big cities so that the smallest settlements are closely integrated into the community economic and social space of Russia”.

It is to what seems to be a quadrature of the circle that the new Strategy tries to answer. By including all the territories, whether central or peripheral, strategic (frontier or rich in raw materials), urban or rural, by linking issues as diverse as the control of the population, the necessary improvement of the large networks of transport and energy, emphasizing the importance of service development beyond megacities, not to mention the need to maintain an ecological balance, this text tries, for the first time in a document of this nature, to make coherent what was until now only the sum of scattered objectives.

¹ N. Zubarevich and S. Safronov “Regional Economic Disparities and Development Strategies”, Report of the French-Russian Observatory 2014 and N. Zubarevich “The Russian Regions: Geography of the Crisis”, Report of the French-Russian Observatory, 2016

One of the most disputed issues during the long preparation of the Strategy was the role of major Russian cities. For many experts, and apparently the first official designers of the text shared this opinion, only a few major urban centers were able to pull up the growth of the country by spreading their dynamism to the surrounding territories. The debates were passionate about the characteristics and the number of these poles. Some felt that only the capitals, Moscow and Saint Petersburg, could claim this role. Others, like the director of the Giprogor (an official city-planning institute), proposed eight centers more or less well distributed [Grudinina, 2016]. The threshold of one million inhabitants (15 Russian cities reach it) was considered by many as determining but with three exceptions (Krasnoyarsk, Novosibirsk and Omsk), they are all in the European part which reinforces one of the essential disparities to be overcome. Others warned against the implications of a strategy of giving priority to fifteen or twenty major cities. In the recent period, the demographic growth of millionaire cities has been maintained by drying up the labor resources of entire regions and their supposed training effect remains to be verified.

The solution proposed by the Strategy is original in several ways. First, and some reproach it for this scattering, it designates a very large number of cities as “potential center (perspective) of growth”, without taking into account their extremely contrasted real situations: labor resources, presence of dynamic local actors, nature of relations with their environment etc. 65 cities are thus designated, divided into several categories according to their size (including cities of less than half a million inhabitants) and their possible contribution to the growth of the country (21 are supposed to give each more than 1% of national growth). Of these, 20 must become world-class centers in the field of education and research.

But the main originality is of another nature. For the first time in an official document, cities are not considered within their administrative boundaries but include all their agglomerations, including a number of rural areas. This is a decisive step towards taking into account the new realities of development, with areas of economic and social attractiveness, commuting migrations, peri-urban phenomena, etc. This novelty is unanimously welcomed by specialists even if it raises a whole series of new problems: there is no real statistics at the level of these agglomerations that will have to be defined and above all, no associated level of power. And this can be a real handicap in a country where the weight of the administrations remains essential.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Russia has always been weak in terms of infrastructure development. It was true under the tsars, through all the Soviet period and it's still true in our days after the fall of the Soviet system. This weakness has important consequences. As Vladimir Kaganskii wrote: “An important element of a region is its coherence, the connections of its territory. The Russian Federation is much less “connected” than each of its parts. Numerous nodal regions intersect on its territory, but none match the Federation in its entirety. The preservation of Russia as a state entity requires large ongoing efforts”. [Kaganskii, 2001]

There have always been people who understood the consequences of that weakness and have been working on overcoming it. Let remind a galaxy of famous geographers of different periods: Semenov-Tyan-Shansky (father and son), N.N. Baranski, I.M. Mayergoyz and others. Scientific analyze of the problem in Russia has always outpaced managerial practices and political decision-making. Planning of the country's infrastructure development has always depended on two groups of factors: objective ones such as the vast territory and its severe weather conditions; subjective ones as political, financial, administrative resources and also the personal interest of the country leaders.

The Soviet period was marked by important work that helped to improve the situation in the field of major infrastructure (mainly railways and pipes), but failed to reach the level of most industrial countries. Furthermore, it is extremely important to consider the fact that the Soviet plans were aimed to a different territory, the whole USSR, so a significant part of the infrastruc-

ture created by the moment of the USSR's breakup was left outside actual Russian territory, reinforcing the inconsistencies of existing infrastructure networks. Segments of major railways remained outside the borders of the federation and a large part of the axes (ports, gas & oil pipes) used for the export of Russian raw materials became dependent on new independent transit countries [Zubarevich, 2017].

In the 1990s, spatial and infrastructural development was marked by a row of declarative understanding of the problem but a lack of practical measures. On the contrary, during that period the economic communications between regions and individual enterprises were disrupted. Territories and regions were divided as they had never been before so that one could fear for a moment that Russia itself could burst [Radvanyi, 1992].

The situation changed in the early 2000s with V. Putin's coming to power. One can study Vladimir Putin's interest in territorial and spatial issues from several angles that mark as many stages in his long exercise of power. The first in chronological order is the restoration of a strong centralized power against regional fragmentation with the establishment of federal districts. The second is the affirmation of the territory as one of the essential elements of the new Russian identity, one of the reasons of his involvement in the geographical society. The new battle to improve infrastructure networks, one of the key issues of the Spatial Strategy, is another main point that we will try to develop here.

Today state spatial development issues are under the control of federal and regional authorities, large businesses, science organizations or development institutes. Tens of expert meetings, international forums, and different councils aiming to define the economic policy of the country are promoting ways to improve the situation. Modernization and backbone infrastructure development plan by 2024 was approved on the 3rd of September in 2018. It was designed to realize 11 federal projects. Nine of them are aimed to modernize and extend mains transport corridors West-East and North-South for cargo transportation and for increasing territorial communication level. The other two are aimed to modernize and extend energy infrastructure.

What has really been done to solve infrastructure deficit issues? What plans have been realized successfully, but what has remained a dead letter? Can we observe an outbreak effect which would allow to really increasing Russian territorial development? Did the regions start feeling better? What is currently happening to infrastructural projects when the economic growth rate has significantly slowed down the latest 4 years?

In order to find the answers to these questions, we created a geographical database of all the largest infrastructural objects like a) motorways, b) railways, c) airports, d) pipelines, e) sea and river ports, f) telecommunication infrastructure, g) energy infrastructure etc. In total, we highlighted 8 sectorial components, including the cities hosting of FIFA 2018 World Cup, special economic zones (SEZ) and territories of priority development (TPD). Our main sources are the economic site: <https://ruxpert.ru/> and the official governmental site: <https://programs.gov.ru/Portal/>, completed by other Russian press and media sources.

Each project contains information in the geographical database, with 9 parameters including expected effects from its realization. One of the key parameters is the financial amount of each project – not less than 1bn rubles at the moment of realization. Probably this level might be questioned but we consider this particular amount as the minimal one to manage state objectives.

Time parameters are considered according to the project status analysis. This criterion helped us to highlight the projects: a) executed in the 21st century but started in the 20th century, b) created in 2000–2018, c) being built or projected in 2018.

Using the database and GIS analysis we tried to estimate the impact of the first 18 years of the 21st century on infrastructure development. As the result, we present different tables (see below) and maps of the new infrastructure shifts in Russia.

Tables and map indicates clearly that the top priority is the creation of new backbone pipelines, energy lines, and all other projects necessary to increase the autonomous export capacities of Russian natural resources. In the last years, the key issue has become planning alternative routes of delivery of natural gas to Europe avoiding Ukraine and the Baltic States such as the North Stream 1 & 2 and Turkish Stream. Because all the main transport channels connecting Russian deposits with western clients passed through these currently independent states, the transit issues were constantly getting more complicated because of strengthening international sanctions. New more independent routes of energy resources delivery are constantly required.

Consequently, Russian authorities developed port infrastructure in the Baltic, North, Black Sea and Far East facades of the country. Completely new ports were launched, such as Ust-Luga and Bronka (Leningrad Oblast), universal Big Zarubino port (Primorsky territory), coal terminal in Sukhodol and Vera (Primorsky territory), mineral terminal near Pavlovskaya deposit (Novaya Zemlya). The old Arctic Northern Sea Route which is believed to provide cargo flow increase up to 80 m tons per year (comparing to current 8–10 m tons) got tremendous new founding which included the construction of new military bases and new atomic icebreakers. Railway infrastructure is being actively developed, most planned projects of which are also tightly connected with natural resources transportation routes.

Despite this, there are plenty of good examples of modernization and high-tech transport infrastructure building aimed to develop inter-territorial communication. For examples, a high-speed railway communication which connects Saint Petersburg, Moscow, and Nizhniy Novgorod or the M4 “Don” motorway or the building of a new set of major internet cables connecting Europe to Asia through the Russian territory. All these are clear evidence that the strategy of spatial development has already been launched.

Authorities are planning other railway projects such as Moscow – Kazan, Yekaterinburg – Chelyabinsk, Krasnodar – Grozny – Makhachkala. Their realization will help the development of many growing urban agglomerations and whole macro-regions of the country. One of the largest and already accomplished projects is the Crimea Bridge. Its costs exceeded 230bn rub, but it already allowed more than 6million people to visit the peninsula in 2018.

World-class airports were built or renovated within FIFA 2018 CUP preparation, Winter Olympics, University Games and ATEC forums in such cities as Rostov-on-Don, Sochi, Kazan, Vladivostok and others.

International transit projects seem ambitious like the Russian components of the huge Chinese project of the New Silk Road (One Belt, One Road or OBOR) for cargo and passenger transportation from China to European countries. Internet transit project looks realistic as well as the building of large data centers in Siberia which benefits from its low energy prices. It will prospectively allow Russia to integrate into the World IT infrastructure and perhaps to occupy some positions in the area of cloud storage, blockchains and cryptocurrencies.

It is more difficult to analyze the efficiency of creating special economic zones (SEZ) and territories of priority development (TPD) because the majority of them are only at the stage of planning and those existing are only at the developing stage. International experience shows that it takes decades to estimate actual results of creating such territories. Nevertheless, the territories with special economic regime boosted economic growth in many developed countries. The Russian experience in this area is contradictory. On the one hand, the Russian press and the experts constantly praise the successes of these SEZ in their Chinese neighbor. But on the other hand, all the Russian attempts have had mixed effects mainly due to the behavior of the federal authorities, which have constantly changed the rules of operation of these zones, a crucial point to avoid in order to attract foreign partners in the long term.

Table 1. Investment distribution in Russia according to main sectors and Federal Regions

| Federal Regions | Railways | | Pipelines | | Motorways | | Energy | | Sea Ports | | Airports | | Projects in total (number) | Investments in total (trillion rubles) |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------------|-----------|-----------------|------------|-----------------|------------|-----------------|-----------|-----------------|-----------|-----------------|----------------------------|--|
| | Number | trillion rubles | Number | trillion rubles | Number | trillion rubles | Number | trillion rubles | Number | trillion rubles | Number | trillion rubles | | |
| Far East | 15 | 3,517 | 6 | 1,610 | 20 | 0,895 | 15 | 1,348 | 8 | 0,350 | 2 | 0,031 | 66 | 7,751 |
| Privolzhsky | 6 | 0,095 | – | – | 16 | 0,610 | 15 | 0,243 | – | – | 5 | 0,036 | 42 | 0,984 |
| North West | 8 | 0,930 | 7 | 1,647 | 13 | 0,645 | 16 | 0,552 | 6 | 0,359 | 1 | 0,047 | 51 | 4,180 |
| North Caucasus* | – | – | 1 | 0,015 | 1 | 0,020 | 5 | 0,054 | 1 | 0,020 | 1 | 0,016 | 9 | 0,125 |
| Siberian | 10 | 0,903 | 4 | 2,037 | 12 | 0,874 | 14 | 0,335 | – | – | 4 | 0,057 | 44 | 4,206 |
| Ural | 9 | 1,343 | 7 | 1,600 | 13 | 0,386 | 19 | 0,570 | 2 | 0,261 | 2 | 0,032 | 52 | 4,192 |
| Central | 17 | 3,224 | 2 | 0,040 | 37 | 1,767 | 24 | 0,976 | – | – | 4 | 0,312 | 84 | 6,319 |
| South | 10 | 0,302 | 8 | 1,013 | 13 | 1,426 | 14 | 1,499 | 5 | 0,318 | 4 | 0,100 | 54 | 4,658 |
| Total: | 75 | 10,313 | 35 | 7,961 | 125 | 6,623 | 122 | 5,578 | 22 | 1,308 | 23 | 0,630 | 402 | 32,414 |

* Without considering Sochi O.G. 2014 constructions – 324,9 billion rubles (Court of Auditors of the RF) and FIFA 2018 World Cup – 683 billion rubles (calculations by JLL company)

Table 2. Investment according to infrastructural branches, number of projects

| Branch | Investments (billion rubles) | | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|--------|-------------|---------|
| | 1–50 | 50–100 | 100 or more | No data |
| Motorways | 89 | 12 | 15 | 9 |
| Railways | 41 | 5 | 20 | 9 |
| Pipelines | 10 | 4 | 17 | 3 |
| Airports | 21 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Ports (sea and river ports) | 13 | 2 | 5 | 2 |
| Energy Infrastructure | 98 | 8 | 7 | 11 |
| Telecommunications | 5 | 1 | 4 | 1 |

As we see on table 1 and 2, the main axes of the infrastructural policy in Russia are oriented on resources export, international transit and improving inter-territorial communication. The majority of ongoing projects is connected with two directions: new transcontinental transport ways and energy infrastructure development. Volumes of investments differ a lot from project to project from one to 50 billion rubles for the majority to several hundred (the Crimea bridge) and even more for the most expensive like some pipes and railways under construction. Even if we failed to find open source data concerning certain projects, it is obvious that the most expensive are directed at improving inter-territorial communication and natural resource export. Many of them are based on long-term agreements of natural gas supply to Europe and Southeast Asia (mostly China).

Some projects have been realized due to significant growth of investments since the 2000s. A part of them are planned for the 2018–2025 period and only a few are planned in the longer term (2030 or later) – table 3.

Table 3. Investment distribution according to the implementation phase

| Project Status | Number of projects |
|--------------------------|--------------------|
| Complete | 258 |
| Implemented by 2025 | 132 |
| Long-term implementation | 23 |
| Total: | 402 |

Lastly, a very different category of new infrastructures must be mentioned because it remains most often outside the published analyses of the major works in progress in Russia. These are the many projects of local or regional importance but that have decisive effects on the daily life of entire regions: building new bridges or tunnels to end the many black spots of the circulation; renovation of bridges, tunnels that have become dangerous or unsuitable; creation of roads bypassing many towns and cities so that transit flows do not cross the centers of these cities. These smaller but often decisive projects are scattered all over the country and are rarely mentioned while they imply significant progress in daily operations and we tried to point them when they were of significant importance.

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

If it is relatively easy, from the sources available in the Russian media, to list the major projects underway, then another question arises: how are these projects chosen? At which level and according to which criteria are the decision-making and financial arbitration that lead to giving preference to such a project, in such region? As we see on the map, there are some leading regions and others that remain marginal or outsider. The difference between them is not only defined by the resources base but as well by the special features of Russia's model of federalism and economic managing. Investments have become a powerful political tool to manipulate the regions by the Center. The closer the head of a region is to the Administration of the President, the wider range of opportunities for developing the region's infrastructure they have and vice versa.

The region's inequality so familiar for Russia is adjusted in the "political kitchen" according to the priorities of the moment [Furshik, Shutova, Prozorov, Saveliev, Goryacheva, 2014]. On the domestic front, the federal center certainly takes into account the tensions that appear in this or that region, the demands of their elites and the various pressure groups that exist. The proposal to fund a long-awaited project is an argument for lowering tensions or raising the popularity of power. International cooperation and the need to strengthen liaison instruments with any neighbor or ally are also strong arguments, as shown by the importance of projects aimed at improving transport and transit infrastructure to Turkey on the one hand, to China and the countries of the Asia-Pacific zone, on the other hand, which are a logical extension of the Soviet-era focus on relations with the European Union.

Geopolitical changes can also lead to the start of unexpected investment projects as we see in the Crimean Peninsula. But taking into account that Russia, in general, has huge investments lacunas, it is not surprising to find many marginalized regions. Among the outsiders, we can notice some of the northern regions of the European part of the Federation like Arkhangelsk, Ivanovo, Pskov, but also some Caucasian republics like Ingushetia or Karachaevo-Cherkessia. There also, geopolitical changes play a leading role. The number of Russian administrative regions that have become border regions has increased significantly after the break-up of the USSR: not counting the regions bordered by outer seas, it has increased from 11 to 34! But this factor, which is usually considered as positive for regional development because of cross-border trade, does not play everywhere in the Russian case. If the border regions with China or Kazakhstan take advantage of this position instead, the deterioration of relations with the Baltic States or with Ukraine implies on the contrary a reversal of the trend of which we already perceive the negative effects in terms of infrastructures [Kolosov, 2018].

The new Strategy proposes a special treatment for the so-called “strategical territories” including all the border regions. It will be interesting to see as this point is treated in practice.

One interesting point is how the President and his administration select the territories for development and create special spots of power exactly there. These places are almost instantly included in his own timetable (travels, meetings with the governors...) and soon turn up in huge constructions for future sports events, forums, summits, meetings with government leaders etc. Some of them the President chooses to spend his holidays and initiates local social projects. Since many years, it was possible to see the impact in Russia of one-off programs related to special events such as summits of international organizations (for example, we have selected the BRICS, Shanghai Organization or APEC Summits) and major sporting events (Olympiads, World Cups). The certainty that the cities chosen for these events would reap significant financial spin-offs and the construction of new infrastructures (airports, hotels, congress halls ...) increases competition between cities to be designated.

Sochi is a bright example of this kind of great infrastructural boom. The city and its region benefit both from a crucial presidential choice: this is where the president decided to install his main second residence and he organizes there many meetings with foreign leaders. And he decided that the city would also host both the 2013 Olympic Winter Games and the 2018 FIFA World Cup definitively installing the city and all the Krasnodar kray as one of the top developed region of Russia. But the President is physically incapable of developing all regions and cities at this regime. Besides, paying attention to some territories the government leader is inevitably distracted from the others. While Sochi was booming, we saw how the Caucasian Mineral Waters district came to the state of decay. Although the region used to be highly visited by the Soviet leaders and top government managers during the whole Soviet period and was still recently considered as an elite and major balneal resort center of the country.

From a completely different point of view, the importance attached to these major projects in economic and budgetary policy implies to question how they are implemented in a country known for its practices of low transparency and corruption. Despite the often repeated promises to open tenders, even for foreign investors, most major projects seem to be awarded to Russian companies already known as close to the power, as in the case of the quick attribution (January, 2015) of the construction of the Crimean Bridge to Stroigazmontaj, a Russian company headed by Arkadi Rotenberg, former judo partner of the president. We understand that the strategic nature of this project involved using a particularly reliable company. Moreover, the systematic use of oligarchs to co-finance various large projects is based on another Russian specificity: sometimes called patronage, these calls are a form of imposed loyalty. We allow you to enrich yourself on the condition that you contribute to some of the State's expenses for the benefit of all.

If one goes down in the decision-making chain surrounding the realization of these projects, especially at the regional and local levels, one often finds these accusations of embezzlement and corruption which would largely benefit some unscrupulous local leaders. The spectacular arrest of Alexander Trubnikov, who was responsible for building the roads of the Voronezh region in 2015 (more than one hundred million rubles in cash had been found at his home) marked the opinion. The Russian press often cites such examples in the construction of roads, bridges and other types of infrastructure, resulting in considerable uncertainty about the real cost of these projects and their economic and social efficiency, so that public is sometimes divided on their opportunity, seeing there only opportunities for enrichment of the elites.

Due to the lack of clear complex infrastructure development strategy, new projects often appear without real consistency. Interregional and interregional development issues are left disregarded. It is not clear how to fight the super development of Moscow and Moscow region, how to solve the problem of competitions between regions like Rostov and Krasnodar; Nizhniy Novgorod and Kazan; Krasnoyarsk and Irkutsk; Khabarovsk and Vladivostok.

Of course, the FIFA 2018 World Cup undoubtedly boosted the infrastructure development for 11 centers of Russia. There have been built a lot of objects such as airports, modern stadiums, hotels etc. Although the infrastructure improvement is significant, the majority of these cities failed to transform the investments into a truly comfortable environment. For example, none of the cities relaunched the public transport system in accordance with the top modern practices. The construction quality and the logics of public spaces do not meet the world requirements as well. The gigantism of some projects (like huge stadiums) creates a real problem for local budgets. The future of these sports objects and their possible utilization have not been determined yet. To some extent, Ekaterinburg turned as a positive example as part of the stadium may be transformed and reduced.

How will the infrastructure be used in other cities? Does it match the cities' sizes and meet the citizen's demands? Exclave Kaliningrad is poorly available for the most Russian citizens when the whole region occupies less than 1 % of Russia's population. Possibilities of Saransk as the locomotive for nearby territories are pretty doubtful. The issue is worsened with the lack of clear vision of the infrastructural future by the city administration.

CONCLUSION

The promulgation of the Strategy in February 2019 did not put an end to the controversy. Many commentators believe that this is only a utopian plan, close to the voluntarist declarations of the Soviet era. However, regional decision makers are well aware that while many of these plans were unfinished, some proposed projects were well and truly realized and all fought for their regions to benefit. It is clear that the intentions displayed by the text imply colossal sums and delays that go well beyond the set date (2025). This is a long-term orientation program. No doubt the realization of some elements can benefit from other parallel projects, such as the modernization of major transport routes that would enter the program of "new silk routes" in cooperation with China. But where will the necessary resources be found for this multitude of projects?

More specifically, experts are concerned about the administrative frameworks for its implementation. In addition to the question of agglomerations mentioned above, the creation of twelve new "macro-regions" is perplexing: they do not correspond to any current administration and their stated purpose (coordination of projects involving several regions) does not completely justify them. The part of the text that raises the most questions is the long list of "promising economic specializations" detailed for each region (see an example in the appendix). How to understand this list? Does it exclude public or private initiatives that would come out of selected sectors? Does the state really have the means to influence these choices, many of which depend on private investors? If one analyzes Rosstat's data on total investments by region, there are huge disparities: in 2017, Moscow and its region alone attracted 16.6 % of the federal total, the plain of the Ob (Tyumen and the two hydrocarbon producing districts) 14.4 % while two of the strategic priority regions (the Far East and the North Caucasus) received only 7.6 and 3.1 %, respectively. But many aspects of the daily life of Russians depend on a better distribution of investments especially in less privileged areas, small towns, rural areas outside the privileged south; and this largely determines the migratory movements that the authorities are struggling to control.

The question of funding and management of the sites involved in the Strategy raises many questions. The strengthening of the "vertical of power" has considerably reduced the financial autonomy of the regions and even more of the cities whose budget is totally dependent on their regional supervision (except of the three federal cities, Moscow, Saint Petersburg and Sevastopol). In these circumstances, is there not a risk of prolonging the lobbying practices that largely determine the distribution of federal funding (the vast majority of budgets of cities and regions)? It is certainly up to the State to determine the main orientations of the space strategy and in this sense, this text, by its breadth and coherence, constitutes a relevant basis. But can we imagine

that such a process could be achieved without greater decision-making and budgetary autonomy of local and regional actors? This is one of the questions left unresolved by the hyper-centralizing evolution of the current system. This can be done within the framework of a special sustainable development program.

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