PATHS FOR SIBERIA'S DEVELOPMENT

Sociodemographic Issues of the Development of Siberia

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Abstract. This article deals with the problems of the sociodemographic development of Siberia, both past and present. The author considers Siberia to be a macroregion in the context of its interaction with the Russian Far East. This research provides comparative data on Siberian society and the Russian Federation as a whole. Firstly, the author reveals the uneven population distribution in certain Siberian regions and the demographic features of urban settlements in the areas of new exploration. In addition, the paper thoroughly studies the present socioeconomic risks for the region. The statistical data analysis shows that the population of the Siberian macroregion has experienced more rapid depopulation in the last two decades than Russia as a whole. The findings further indicate that Siberia's current development can be successful only through the implementation of an effective regional policy, drawing on its own demographic, financial, and intellectual resources. The results of this thorough sociological research assist the author in identifying the features of migration processes in Siberia and the level of the population's "rootedness". The author pays significant attention to the training of school teaching staff in the Far North, and lists some recommendations for regulating the migration process in this macroregion.

Keywords: Siberia, population migration, territorial development, population "rootedness", pendulum migration, regulation of migration processes, region of new exploration, region sociology, urban sociology, standard of living.

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*"I consider not the matter of having
a vast territory, futile without inhabitants,
but the matter of preservation and propagation
of the people to be the most significant
for the greatness, power, and wellbeing
of the whole country"*

M. V. Lomonosov [14]

This historical and social study aims to:

- consider the exploration and settlement processes of Siberia, their historical origins, and the results attained;

- observe the characteristics of its demographic resource accumulation (human capital) in the 20th century, as well as in the context of post-Soviet social and cultural dynamics;
- determine the possibilities of managing migration processes in order to increase the "rootedness" of the population and achieve the stable socioeconomic development of Siberia.

When journalists asked M. A. Lavrentyev, the founder of the Siberian Branch of the Academy of Sciences, to assess the most audacious project for the society of his time, he stated, that "the develop-

ment of Siberia and the Far East is a dream fulfilled by Russia, from the first explorers to our contemporaries” [11]. The history of Russia, both in the past and at present, is a history of colonisation, often coercive and violent. As V. O. Klyuchevskiy, a great Russian historian of the 19th century, declared, that “the history of Russia is the history of a country that is being colonised. The colonised area expanded along with its state territory. Whether declining or escalating, it is an age-old movement that continues even to the present day” [9].

Spatial expansion or relocation to new territories as one of the most distinguishing features of Russian history is observed in the works of P. Ya. Chaadaev, A. P. Shchapov, M. P. Pogodin, S. M. Solovyov, A. P. Slovtsev, and other Russian historians. This historic trait, defined as the process of colonisation or the process of development (in modern Russian history), can refer to other strong state formations. The concept of “development” (*osvoenie*) in the Russian language derives from the possessive pronoun *svoy* (“one’s own”). In V. Dal’s dictionary, the concept *to develop* is defined as “to make something one’s own, ordinary, or customary” [5]. Philosophers as well as sociologists, when analysing new development through sociocultural processes, relate it to the act of introducing certain values to life in a new place [8].

Siberia as a historical concept, within its broad boundaries, includes the North-East of Kazakhstan and the entire Russian Far East [17]. According to the modern administrative division of the Russian Federation, while remaining a part of the Siberian geographical space, the large Tyumen Region, with its two autonomous areas (the Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous Okrug and the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug) exists as a part of the Ural Federal District. Thus, it is coherent to use the geographical concept of “Siberia” for research, because, at least historically speaking, geographical terms are not as frequently subjected to transformations as territorial or administrative areas, which may result in confusion within scientific and statistical data.

The first condition for the processes of new development, or colonisation, is the presence of vacant territories, either sparsely populated or unpopulated. There were enough such territories to the East of the

Russian ethnos settlement. Western Siberia has the longest history of Russian development, including the very first Russian city in the region, Tyumen, founded more than 430 years ago. From there, the development proceeded to Eastern Siberia, the Far East, and even Alaska. It is here that the most significant military clashes as part of the wave of Turkish colonisation and their vassal states took place (the Siberian Khanate, Prince Kuchum *et al.*).

As for the specifics of exploration and settlement in Siberia, it is necessary to consider its vast areas. At the end of 1689, Tsar Peter I decreed to build a road from Moscow to Irkutsk. The Moscow-Siberian Route (one of the largest roads in the world) was vital for both the economy and culture of 19th century Siberia. The Route started in Moscow and ran for eleven thousand km through Kazan, Tyumen, Tomsk, and Krasnoyarsk all the way to Irkutsk. As noted by V. P. Boyko, “In addition to the roads, the quality of which was considered poor by travellers, infrastructure development along the Route included postal stations, inns, and villages, which ensured continuous freight and passenger traffic across Siberia [4]”.

The distance from Moscow to Tyumen and Omsk is more than 2,000 km; to Novosibirsk, Kemerovo, and Tomsk — 3,000 km; to Krasnoyarsk and Abakan — 4,000 km; to Irkutsk and Ulan-Ude — 5,000 km; and to Cheata — 6,000 km. These significant distances resulted in high transportation costs and complicated the economic interaction between Siberia and the European part of Russia. The Siberian Route remained the vital artery until the last decades of the 19th century, when it was superseded by the Trans-Siberian Railway. The average distance between the neighbouring cities along the Trans-Siberian railway increased towards the East by 2.8 times: from 74 km (on the Tyumen–Baikal section) to 208 km (on the section from Baikal to the Amur region border area).

A special geographic test can indicate the way in which such enormous distances are perceived in mass consciousness. If one asks even an educated person where the halfway point of the train journey from Moscow to Vladivostok is located, the answer is usually that it is Novosibirsk, or Omsk, or, in the best case, Krasnoyarsk. Yet, the correct answer is that the halfway point of this journey is marked by a station

called Polovina (“A Half”), located at the 4,644th km point not far from Irkutsk or Lake Baikal.

The deep intracontinental position (see L. B. Bezrukov) of Siberia, as well as of the Far East, and the limited access to transportation over most of this macroregion are currently the principal obstacles to its socioeconomic improvement. Moreover, rapid changes are not expected in this sphere [3].

Another essential condition for the development of new areas is demographic resources, namely people who are mobile territorially, and who have a certain mentality; indeed, Siberia needs people who consider “a hundred miles not a long distance and forty degrees below zero not cold”. Siberian researchers state that,

“the new territories of different continents in the 17th–19th centuries were mainly explored by the marginal elements of the population — landless peasants, religious ‘schismatics’, adventurers and exiled criminals of all types. Such people were the first settlers in Siberia, North America and Australia. This ‘wave’ of freedom and change-seekers was both resilient and active, but it was not characterised by obedience to law nor a high level of education” [7].

Such a major geopolitical task as developing new territories, in all countries and at all times, requires an appropriate state demographic policy.

The development of Siberia has always been a sufficiently deliberate task. Organised either by the state or spontaneously, Cossack troops, merchants, and scientific expeditions from the 16th century onwards took to one main direction: the East. As of the 18th century, the government used new territories as places of criminal and political exile. During the 19th century, more than 800,000 people were deported to Siberia [19]. The end of the 19th century and the early 20th century, the time of the Stolypin reforms, saw serious state support for the relocation of farmers from the densely populated European part of the country to Siberia and the Far East. 20th-century Siberian history is associated with organised recruitment in the construction sector, industrial detachments in Siberian regions with relatively favourable conditions, and the Gulag system in places with extreme climates. In Soviet times, start-

ing in the 1960s, the Soviet State began making public appeals to young people and organising the formation of target youth groups, the movement of student construction brigades. The state began deploying young graduates to large construction sites in the region. Furthermore, the military units of railway troops built the Eastern branch of the Baikal-Amur Mainline. During modern Russian/Soviet history, such large-scale Siberian projects were not launched or realised, and there thus far was no need to mobilise additional human resources. A relatively new form of community enhancement in new development areas (albeit unsuccessful) was seen in the state project of resettling Russian citizens from CIS countries and abroad during periods of dense migration flow, especially from the Central Asian republics of the former Soviet Union and some Asian countries. Thus, we can come to the following conclusion.

In the early 20th century, the population of the Eastern regions of the country rested at 10 mln people, in 1926 — 12.3 mln, in 1979 — 28.0 mln, and by 1989 — 32.3 mln. Despite the military losses and demographic consequences of the Great Patriotic War, the population of Siberia and the Far East increased over six decades by 20 mln people. This demonstrates the efficiency of the new settlement processes [21].

It is interesting to compare the demographic indices of the rapidly advanced Tyumen Region, located in Siberia, and of Alaska, which are approximately equal in territorial size and natural, climatic conditions (1.435 and 1.519 mln km² respectively). Tyumen, the capital of the Tyumen Region, is home to 721,000 people (as of 2016), which is practically equal to the entire population of the Northern US state (735,000 inhabitants as of 2016). However, there are 28 other cities in addition to the capital of the Tyumen Region, most of which formed during the oil and gas boom. Another parameter distinguishes Alaska from the Tyumen Region: while in Russia, especially in the Tyumen Region, permafrost covers 65% of the territory, in Alaska it covers only 38% of the total area. We should also consider the mild climate with the non-frozen ocean of the South-Western part of the state [1].

Since the beginning of the 1990s, Siberia and the Far East have begun depopulating noticeably for several reasons. Over the last ten years, the population fell by nearly 2 mln because of decreased birth rates, increased mortality rates, and an increase in migration to the Western regions of the country. Furthermore, as S. V. Soboleva emphasises, the closer a Russian region is to the border with its Eastern neighbours, the greater its migration outflow is [23].

Thus, while the total population of Russia decreased by 3.5%, from 148 mln in 1990 to 143.2 mln by 2012, the population of the Siberian Federal District decreased by 8.8% from 21.1 to 19.3 mln, and the Far Eastern Federal District population decreased even more, by 22.3%, from 8.1 to 6.3 mln [22: 29].

The history of the exploration of the Siberian and Far Eastern regions shows that it was constantly accompanied by discussions on their social and economic development, and the ideas of separatism and regionalism. Of course, the very first tasks for the new territories occur in accordance with the geo-political, economic, and sociocultural state policies. Therefore, the new development processes are financed by the state budget and large corporations. For example, the largest Russian state corporations, such as Gazprom, Rosneft, and others, currently support the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug. But large regions cannot be developed evenly: some areas are just starting to be developed and populated, with modern transportation infrastructure under construction there, while others are at the stage of complex development with a fundamentally different set of targeted programmes and new opportunities. Any delay in the transition always has a noticeable impact on new cities, their economies, and social infrastructure. These determine the demographic structures, the directions, and pace of migration processes. A new city which pumps tens of millions of tons of oil, or tens of billions of cubic metres of natural gas, cannot and should not be subsidized by the state. It makes no sense that the city budget can hardly make ends meet. In this situation, the city authorities and its population may not be implementing effective social and economic development policies.

The contradictions between the national interests of large corporations and the territories themselves are becoming acute. The regional economic policy of large corporations relies on the principle that “the territory is for production”, rather than “production is for the territory”. Such corporations are assigned not only the task of developing resources, but also the distribution of the results obtained. Corporations are “ideal instruments for pursuing policies that are very similar to those of a metropole and its colonies” [16].

At a certain stage, a regional policy should be devised based on local demographic, financial, and intellectual resources. It only makes sense to develop an algorithm for the development of any territory. Over the course of modern history, the most advanced countries of Europe divided the territories of South and North America, Africa, Australia, and Indochina. These developmental processes came about in the form of mass export of natural resources and labour. Naturally, at some stage of the national consciousness growth, people began to view the dependence on metropolitan areas negatively; separatist and nationalist sentiments and independence movements began to grow. Most modern nation states were created in the 19th and 20th centuries on the territories of former colonies. Why then has Siberia, with its natural riches and spiritually brave and freedom-loving people, avoided this destiny?

The attempts at independence have nonetheless been made throughout the history of Russia. The ideas of “regionalism,” implying economic separation and a special status for Siberia, revive and grow popular during periods of reform and revolution. In recent years, the emergence of real federalism, the expansion of subjects’ legislative powers, and interregional contract cooperation among Siberian regions have seriously blurred the ideological basis of the independence movements. Yet, protests still exist, as revealed by the relatively high population outflow from Siberia and the adoption of the “anti-Moscow” “Manifesto of Siberian Socialists,” as well as the recent registration of “Siberian National Autonomy”.

It would hardly be serious to talk about Siberian separatism under current Russian conditions. Yet, the issues of mentality formation as well as attracting and

retaining people in Siberia (especially in the Far East) still remain. It seems wrong to proceed from the position that the standard of living in Siberia must be better than in the rest of Russia. It is more significant to answer the questions of who explored Siberia and why, as well as what resources were employed in the exploration of Siberia. It is preferable to show transparently Siberia's place in the "national pie" (*kara-vay*), rather than espousing the divisive position that "it is Russia that joined Siberia." But, on the other hand, one cannot underestimate the importance of Siberia and let local living standards decrease. It will not be possible to manage migratory processes, which in recent decades have acquired special significance, unless the difficulties and additional costs for living arrangements in extreme natural and climatic conditions are recouped.

Siberia faces the following social and economic challenges, as V. G. Puzikov says,

"The decline in 'West-East' migration increases 'South-East' migration from the CIS countries, which dramatically changes the 'ethnic mosaic' and significantly decreases the sociocultural and technical potential of the Siberian population. The difficulties of adapting 'newcomers' from the South to sociocultural factors and their reluctance to perceive the culture and traditions of the local population increase the marginalisation of the region, cause excessive social tension, and also aggravate competition in the labour market. As a result of 'replacement' migration from the South to the East, there is an inadequate exchange of workers and skilled personnel against a backdrop of closed national and religious community formation where clan-nishness and group solidarity prevail, thus re-activating crisis phenomena and complicating the execution of the planned social and economic programmes for Siberia" [20].

One of the most acute geopolitical problems in Russia, including the regions of Siberia, is the population shift towards the South-West, although the basic resources (excluding agriculture) are concentrated in the North-East. Therefore, the population distribution by major latitudinal zones in Siberia is as follows. Southern Siberia, occupying 20% of the territory, is

home to 80% of the population. The Near North, an area to the north of the main strip of settlement, occupies 18.5% of the territory of Siberia, with 12.7% of its population. The Far North, a vast, sparsely-populated space of taiga and tundra, stretches over 61.6% of the Siberian territory with only 7.4% of Siberians living there. A peculiar feature of the Far North is that over 93% of its territory is occupied by administrative and territorial units and municipalities based on ethnic principles, which must be taken into account in the development of natural resources in these regions.

A large part of the Siberian population lives in Southern Siberia (located south of the permafrost line), enjoying relatively favourable natural conditions. Cities with a population of 1 mln have been formed in the region (Novosibirsk, Omsk, Krasnoyarsk), while other urbanized agglomerations are being formed (Kemerovo, Irkutsk, Kansk-Achinsk, Sayan, Irkutsk-Cheremkhovo, etc.).

The main feature of the settlement system in the areas of new development in Siberia is the foundation of small and, in rare cases, large cities due to the specifics of extracting local natural resources. Out of the twenty-four cities formed as a result of oil and gas development in the Western Siberia, only four can be considered large (Surgut, Nizhnevartovsk, Novy Urengoy, Noyabrsk), whereas the rest constitute a group of small towns with problems on a different scale. Such towns with one basic enterprise, even large or unique, are poorly protected from the conditions of regular economic crises. They often require the government's financial support.

Conditions in bigger cities in the areas of new development sometimes appear not to be significantly better. The main problem here is the inadequate consideration of long-term forecasts for the evolving industrial centres. For example, the design of the first stage of a city, as a rule, takes 5–10 years. The first general construction plan of the city of Bratsk appeared in 1958, four years after actual construction had started. Originally, the city was planned for 60,000 people, who would work mainly at the most powerful hydroelectric power station of the time. Moreover, after the general construction plan had been approved, and due to the powerful source of

cheap electricity located in the district, it was decided to build the country's largest timber industry complex in this city. The potential population thus increased 3–4 times. Furthermore, a decision to establish an aluminium plant was the reason to introduce the third general construction plan of the city. It was followed by a powerful heating equipment factory. Thus, over twenty years, four general construction plans for the city were devised [13: 134].

Such was the foundation of a large (but not very neat) city scattered over hundreds of km², with a variety of environmental, socioinfrastructural, and other problems. There were a considerable number of problems with the general construction plans for new cities in the context of a planned economy and state provision of new town-planning. It is easy to imagine the aggravated scale of such problems in the context of a market economy.

A notable demographic phenomenon concerning the development of new areas, especially in high latitude areas, involves increased migration activity among the population, including reverse migration. The causes are of significance.

Less than a half of new settlers remain in new locations for a long time — many of them leave during the first year for a number of reasons. It is clear that such reverse migration is very costly for the state, the new city, its construction sites, and enterprises. One of the recent studies in the field of intensive development has attempted to assess the dimensions of such migration and its consequences¹. We studied the lifestyle and standard of living

of teaching personnel in the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug, as due to the current gas fields' activity, there are active processes of new urban and transportation infrastructure development in the area.

It seems interesting to analyse the "rootedness" of the population, which can be determined by the period of residence in one place. Yamal is a territory of new development with only a fifth of the population living there for more than a quarter of a century. They can be regarded as old-timers, indigenous people. On average in Russia, 64% of the adult population have lived in one place for more than 25 years. In the South of the Tyumen Region, an area which is quite developed, this figure reaches 53%, but in the Yamal Peninsula it is only 20% [24].

The high mobility of the Siberian population can be seen in the responses to the question "Were you born here or have you come from another region of the country?" On the whole, the adult population in Russia responded as follows: 55% of people live in the city, town, or region where they were born, but in the Yamal Peninsula such people are twice as few (only 22%). This means that for 78% of the population, Yamal is a new place of residence.

Large-scale development of a vast, sparsely-populated area is always accompanied by significant demographic shifts and intense migration processes. The organisation of the daily life of newcomers is complicated by dozens of social problems, the most significant of which is establishing a general and vocational education system practically from scratch. The possibility for a new settler to get good vocational education, enhance their professional skills and provide their children with good education is the most valuable lifestyle attribute in newly-developed settlements, and is the major concern of state and local authorities.

While establishing the material and technical basis of educational institutions, it is essential to train qualified pedagogical personnel. If the local construction and industrial production companies can in many cases follow reliable methods (shift work) employing highly qualified workers and engineers from the inhabited areas, educational establishments should be able to selectively hire and invite experts

¹ The survey was carried out via printed questionnaires, as well as via the Internet during March–July 2016. The total number of people surveyed was 4,830 teachers of the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous District (according to the data of the Territorial Body of the Federal State Statistics Service for the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous District at the end of 2014). The sample size included 680 respondents. The standard sampling error is 3.55% (calculation according to V. I. Paniotto's formula), which indicates the necessary reliability of the data collected. The method of selecting sampling units omitted repetitions, depending on the number of sampling steps; single-stage sampling was used. The sample type is a quota with representation by sex and duration of work as a teacher.

with the necessary degrees and qualifications. This has become the only possible solution since the system of state distribution of vocational school graduates (which existed in the centralised administrative system) was discontinued.

There are still no higher education institutions in Yamal, and training is organized only for secondary vocational school teachers. Therefore, only individual invitations can be the main means to train teaching personnel, including the residents of the autonomous district, whose study at university is subsidized by the local authorities. Teachers with higher pedagogical education are indispensable in a modern school with its technological innovations and federal standards. However, sometimes or if there is no other way, specialists with higher education in any sphere are invited to work at schools.

By and large, a similar situation exists in other professional groups, like doctors and social workers, because these professional groups are formed spontaneously or by organized migration flows.

The consequences of mass migration shifts can be studied using the example of teaching staff (which forms a large group of intellectuals): the terms of their stay in the Far North, migration routes, the difficulties of adaptation, migration attitudes, etc. The results of a sociological survey reveal that only 14% of teachers at Yamal schools identify themselves as indigenous people of Yamal, 76% consider themselves to be migrants permanently residing in the area, whereas 7% reside in the area temporarily. The distribution of answers to the question “How many generations of your family have been living in the Far North?” is also thought-provoking. The largest group of Northerners (56%) identify themselves as migrants permanently residing in Yamal, and make up the first generation of Northerners. The second group (30%) comprises two generations, stating that their parents were the first to come to Yamal. The third group (7%) includes three generations and represents the grandchildren of the present generation who first settled in Yamal. The fourth group (8%) consists of more than four generations [25: 105].

The main factor that determined the respondents’ choosing a job in the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug was “a higher level of pay” (63%). The par-

ents of 33% of the respondents lived in the Far North, and the respondents themselves went there due to the “family tradition.” 29% of teachers came to work in the Far North “to test themselves.” The following factors appeared to be significantly less influential: “interest in extreme conditions of life and work” (11%), “interest in the ethnoculture of the peoples of the Far North” (7%), “directed to work by educational authorities” (5%), “interest in educating the children of those who live and work in the tundra” (4%) [25: 105].

Assessing the level of “rootedness,” it is significant to analyse the answers to the question “Do the generations of your family take part in the migration cycle comprising migration to the North and migration from the North?” — a form of long-term pendulum commuting. For 41% of the teachers surveyed, this is a usual migration pattern [25: 105].

The obtained sociological information shows that the proportion of teachers who are going to live in the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug after they retire is twice as high as the proportion of the indigenous Northerners. This indicates that the positive trend of newcomers “settling down” is increasing significantly. Moreover, these long-term migratory processes turn out to show some unexpected tendencies. Among the teachers surveyed, 12% are from the Southern part of the Tyumen Region (this region stretches from the border with Kazakhstan to the Arctic Ocean, from the sub-Arctic areas in the North to the forest-steppe and steppe areas in the South) and have moved to the Far North, where they currently live. Yet twice as many teachers (24%) are planning to move to the South of the Tyumen Region for permanent residence after they retire. Such prospects for Yamal teachers are opened by the “Community” programme driven by the regional authorities. This programme provides significant urban development projects for the resettlement of Northerners to regions with more favourable natural climatic conditions.

By now, biological and medical science has researched the impact of the Northern climate on human health (V. P. Khaznacheev, M. P. Dyakovich, V. S. Rukavishnikov [6]) and people’s relocation to areas with abrupt differences in climate, e.g., to the Southern regions of Russia. In addition, the adaptation of migrants to the Northern conditions occurs at a young

age, when people are mainly in good health. However, at retirement age (even though the latter is reduced by five years for Northerners), the local conditions — low temperatures, light and radiation impact, lack of oxygen and vitamins from vegetables and fruit, among others — take their toll, and objectively reduce the main health indicators. This may complicate people's adaptation to an environment that is already very different from what they are used to [26].

V. P. Kaznacheev considers the “sedentary” development of the Northern territories as most efficient, for increasing the quality of life of the population will require the improvement of life-supporting systems, including transportation and infrastructure [2].

There is something to ponder, given the adaptation and rehabilitation experience of the millions of people involved in massive migration processes. We must not only create the necessary conditions to attract people to the new areas by establishing social benefits, beyond high regional wage coefficients. This practice pushes the Northerners to lead a lifestyle based on postponed demand, the accumulation of financial resources for a good holiday, or for departure and residence in more densely inhabited areas. For example, planning regulations for the cities in high-latitude areas require greater attention to the creation of indoor spaces for leisure activities. Due to the limited possibility of being outdoors, the urban citizens in the Far North structure their leisure activities differently than urban citizens in areas with a better

climate. In our research on the image of teachers' life in the Yamal Peninsula, teachers assessing their lifestyle in focus-group interviews and questionnaires often outline a limited circle of communication and a lack of cultural and sport infrastructure.

According to the sociological data acquired, it is necessary to manage migration flows competently and on a scientific basis, even within the Siberian regions. Nowadays, these processes occur spontaneously. For example, in recent years, Northerners living and working in high latitudes have bought accommodation in the cities of the South of Siberia, where their grown-up children live and get education. After receiving vocational training, these children find jobs in Northern cities, and their parents, leaving their Northern accommodation, move to the Southern regions of Siberia. This is how two generations with life experience in Siberia function. In the Western Siberia, the meridian railway has been laid along the Eastern slope of the Urals with the prospect of reaching the Arctic Ocean. Tyumen, the capital of the region, has direct air links with the cities of the Middle Ob and Yamal regions. Thus, the transportation system in the region is good, largely due to the shift and expeditionary method of Siberia's Northern regions' development, the migratory flows of the local population, and the usage of Southern Siberia for recreation, healthcare, etc. This pattern of migration flow is particularly well organised, as the development of new territories has moved to the Russian Arctic zone.

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