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Spatial Representation of the Modernisation Processes of Russia's Federal Subjects: A Civilisational Approach

Review of Lapin N. I. (ed.). 2016. Modernisation Atlas of Russia and Its Regions: Socio-Economic and Socio-Cultural Trends and Challenges Moscow: Ves mir.

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When discussing the fate of Russia and its paths of development, the theme of Russia's modernisation takes a particular place. Discussions about modernisation, outlined by the ideas of the survival, development and progress of Russian society, take the discourse to the level of theoretical concepts, ideologies, and political decisions. This process is, however, devoid of ideological dogmas. Modernisation becomes an instrument of transformation in all spheres of public life — politics, society, economics and culture. The academic community and political elite focus on and use the category of modernisation increasingly frequently. The elite views the modernisation approach as a useful tool to explain the transition from traditional society to modern, and the adoption of administrative, managerial and political decisions. The problem of modernisation development is considered together with the innovative comprehension of the development stages for Russian society. In official rhetoric, the concepts of modernisation and innovation often have similar semantic features. This negates their differences and leads to a substitution of the concepts.

Since 2010, the dispute about the readiness of Russian society for modernisation has intensified in the public sphere [7; 9]. New policy is now aimed to interpret modernisation as something new in a strategic way towards a successful Russian society,

the establishment of a strong state, and the strengthening of its position on the global stage. There have been published works analysing official rhetoric [3]. In academic literature, we find works considering various aspects of the theoretical concepts of modernisation [2; 4; 8; 11; 14], which, in a certain space-time, is a kind of lense that allows to see and construct a scenario of the future of the Russian state and its citizens. The theoretical models of modernisation analyse the social sphere and institutions [1; 6; 16; 17], economy, culture and politics [10; 13; 15]. The works focusing on the issues of modernisation can be compared to a mosaic, demonstrating sometimes unsuccessful attempts at a holistic and systematic review of the process. Public debates on the issue have not accomplished much, as mainstream events tend to tire of a particular academic subject. The political course to modernisation development is stalling slightly. Problematising the issue through a constructionist approach, we view modernisation as a social question, which brings us to the study of the social and cultural components of this process; in turn, this would identify the problem of modernisation development as “the rhetoric and activities to nominate certain demanding statements about alleged conditions” [18]. In constructionism, social problems are regarded as dynamic conditions and considered as a sequence of activity steps. It is pos-

sible to outline the field of the modernisation discussion: who is interested in problematising this issue? Who is formulating the agenda? Who are the main actors of modernisation? In this regard, non-conformist research teams, nourishing research and academic discussion are of value for the sociological community, government, and society as a whole.

One of these research teams, focused on the systematic analysis of modernisation processes in modern Russia, is headed by Nikolai Ivanovich Lapin, Corresponding Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS) and Honorary Doctor of the RAS Institute of Sociology. For the first time in the academic world, the research directors and young scientists of the team are taking steps to interpret modernisation as a civilisational process. The recently published pluriennial collective work *Modernisation Atlas of Russia and Its Regions: Socio-Economic and Socio-Cultural Trends and Challenges* is a unique project which not only represents the problem of modernisation in its global aspect, but also identifies clear local specificities. The authors of the project have conducted the research at an expectedly high professional level, using rigorous scientific methods with empirically supported hypotheses. Globalisation as a context appears as the reality that reveals the regional specificity of the RF subjects which implement modernisation policy at varying potential levels.

The research results are presented in an atlas format that promotes their spatial perception. This format is based on the authors' epistemological approach of the atlas "as a spatially systematic representation of the study data, which is significant for their understanding" [12: 7]. The spatial organisation of the data about the object has scientific potential, with resources for explanatory and comparative analysis. It is more a common methodology and measurement with a focus on regional characteristics of each subject than geographical and administrative-territorial coverage.

The atlas' explicit structure highlights the authors' logic: a transition from theoretical reflection to empirical experience, based on the study results and an extensive statistical database. The monograph comprises 10 chapters. The first two are arranged according to the theoretical and methodological issues of

modernisation; the subsequent seven chapters reveal trends and problems in the modernisation of the federal districts and regions, based on rich empirical data; chapter ten summarises the results of the vast study, presenting conclusions and predictions. The Appendix presents tools, pivot tables and charts of indices and regional modernisation options.

From the first pages of the atlas, as well as the authors' attitude, it becomes clear that modernisation is understood as a complex process, based on the civilisational development of mankind. A series of social, historical, economic, judicial and nationwide transformations lead to qualitative changes — modernisation. Changes occur at the level of society and the individual. Heuristic understanding of the dynamics of this process guides the study of the basic functions of modernisation: "community (nation) security and an increase in the nation's well-being, in the quality of life of the entire population" [12: 16]. The quality of life of an individual or group is directly correlated with the level of economic growth and social progress of the country. Adding the progress concept to the analytical model, we derive the discussion of modernisation in terms of global inequality. These are two sides of the same coin: "present global inequality has largely arisen as a result of the successful growth of the modern economy. <...> Modern globalisation has led to an increase in wealth and a corresponding growth in inequality" [5]. The gap in the level and pace of modernisation in developed and developing countries is increasing along with the growth of income and well-being in developed countries. As a result, developing countries are experiencing an incomplete or "catch-up" stage of transition from primary to secondary modernisation, while the advanced stage is under the public discussion of an informational modernisation stage.

The atlas's authors analyse the technical, technological, socio-economic, socio-cultural, institutional and regulatory components of these transformations as the basis for a complex transition to modernisation. Summarising global trends and differentiating the levels of nations' secondary modernisation, the authors conclude that "the problem of maintenance and completion of industrialisation is a priority for the majority of countries, including Russia at this

stage of human history” [12: 18]. The success of modernisation in conditions where “the risks of evading modernisation are increasing in the globalising world” is possible only if there is solidarity among all the actors of the process: the state, the economy, and civic society [12: 20]. When selecting measurement techniques and tools for the statistical data on socioeconomic and social-cultural components of modernisation, the authors look to the long-term results of the study by the Center of Modernisation Research of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CMR of CAS). Each stage of the process is measured in accordance with the selected indicators. At the same time, an integrated index of two stages of modernisation is used, which allows the authors to consider the differentiated stages of the development process within the same country [12: 26–27]. A certain restriction of the instruments focuses the research on the socio-economic component of modernisation, while its partial measurement allows the tools to be adapted to the reality of Russia’s regions. Using this adapted methodology, the researchers classify the level of modernisation of the regions, thus detecting “propagation of the regions’ modernisation, hierarchy, and clustering” [12: 27–29]. The authors identify four levels of socio-cultural space, reveal the contradictions in the social and cultural status of the regions, and identify the modernisation clusters of Russia’s federal districts.

Deepening their understanding of modernisation in the context of social conflicts and cultural diversity, the authors dwell on the aspects of internal challenges for Russian regions and federal districts. The challenges are conditionally differentiated into three groups, which gives perspective on modernisation development [12: 45–47]. There is a rhetorical question about the natural resource potential of Russia. The authors consider it from two diametrically opposite viewpoints: as a barrier and an incentive to modernisation. The impact of the spatial factor and scarce resources lead to a discussion of migration and demographic problems. The authors also clarify the issues of structuration and human capital.

The Central Federal District (CFD) occupies the leading position in terms of socio-economic development among the federal districts. The researchers identify the factors influencing its success. These are

economic-geographical position, infrastructure, and industrial, scientific, technological and human potential. In turn, it is differentiated into two macro-regions: the Central Region and the Central Black Earth Region, where the two stages of modernisation development are observed. As the researchers note, a positive transformation is possible due to the dynamics of the secondary indices of modernisation, with the stability of the level of modernisation as the primary obstacle to integrated evolution [12: 91–96]. An appeal to the typology of regions’ modernisation allows the conclusion that “for twelve years, only four of the eighteen regions of the district have undergone the transition to secondary modernisation, and thirteen regions remained at its primary stage, including seven stagnating regions” [12: 92]. Analysing the key components of modernisation, noting the increase of the balance index of the CFD and the reduction of the unbalanced regions, the researchers come to a conclusion about the potential and resources of the District, which can mobilise internal forces on the path to integrated modernisation. At the same time, they propose a three-stage strategy to integrate modernisation of the CFD.

The conclusions concerning the modernisation processes in the North-West Federal District (NWFD) point to a gap between modernisation “from above” and modernisation “from below”. Social stratification and low living standards are a powerful barrier to the regions’ transformation. In the case of the Southern Federal District (SFD), the researchers suggest gradually implementing effective modernisation ideas: firstly, to balance the development of the modernisation of the “lagging” border subjects of the SFD; secondly, to ensure the concentration of resources to move to secondary modernisation of the regions by strengthening their educational and scientific-technical potential. There is an uneven process of modernisation with qualitative changes and stagnation in the Volga Federal District, as well as at national level. However, the second phase of modernisation dynamics is observed in some regions of the SFD.

Considering the mission of this journal, the modernisation processes analyses seem important in three areas: the SFD [12: 256–272], conducted by

V. S. Polovinko and V. G. Nemirovsky; the Far Eastern Federal District (FEFD; A. V. Nemirovskaya [12: 273-294]); and the Ural Federal District (UFD; V. A. Davydenko, G. F. Romashkina, I. F. Pecherkina, [12: 231-255]).

In particular, the researchers identify three contexts impeding successful modernisation in the regions of the UFD. These contexts are determined by spatial, institutional and structural elements. The regions' integrated modernisation is seen in terms of targeted implementation in each of them, focusing on their strengths and weaknesses, stimulating growth and reindustrialisation, building a favourable economic environment, strengthening investment potential, developing high-tech industries, enhancing intellectual potential in the district (the Sverdlovsk region in particular).

A competitive advantage in matters of social and cultural modernisation is observed in the SFD, which is amplified by the Russian Government's 2020 Strategy for the Socio-Economic Development of Siberia. Mature reflection on the socio-economic indicators leads the researchers to conclusions about the uneven development and the overall status of the RF territorial entity. The analysis of the life expectancy of the population in the SFD reveals the problems of socio-economic modernisation. The analysis transitions from transformation dynamics in higher education, public contentment with life, economic activity and employment, to crime rates, legal environment and migration, thus addressing the socio-cultural components of modernisation. It allows the authors to articulate the problems and challenges set forth in the sphere of SFD modernisation.

The empirical results, obtained during semi-formal interviews with the residents of the Krasnoyarsk Krai in 2015, are of conceptual importance. The study reveals unwillingness to consider a subjective factor in the implementation of social and cultural modernisation in the region, namely the low or almost undocumented levels of safety, quality of life and social well-being of the citizens. The value approach does not escape the attention of the researchers. With this approach, the value system and attitude of the political elite and the region's population are considered. The academic debates about possible

ways of integrated modernisation formulate the three stages of a modernisation strategy.

The analysis of trends and problems of the FEFD's modernisation is a logical conclusion to the collective study of the civilisational approach to modernisation development in the Russian territorial entities. The barriers to the transition from primary to secondary modernisation of the FEFD include unbalanced (or lacking) development of the social, industrial, technological and economic spheres. The researchers note certain problems of modernisation development that are common with those in the SFD. They also enumerate the barriers that hinder the process of social and cultural modernisation: "low diversification of the economy, low level of social infrastructure development, harsh climate, low population density, high rate of depopulation as a result of migration outflows to the European regions of the country" [12: 286–288]. The conclusion about the FEFD is based on its resource potential, which indicates the need for a transition to a new stage of industrialisation, based on advanced information technologies. The prospective scenario of the integrated modernisation strategy of the district is based on the mobilisation of its internal forces with minimal support from the federal centre.

The analysis of each federal district and region is accompanied by a historical reference, thus fully presenting the regions and federal districts involved in the process of modernisation. Each territorial entity of a given federal district is described in terms of its geographical location, natural conditions and zoning areas, as well as socio-historical, economic and political contexts. The discourse is constructed around problematisation and enquiry into paradigms to explain the spontaneous modernisation, imbalance and uniformity of the two modernisation stages in different regions of each federal district: a primary-industrial stage and a secondary-information one.

Undoubtedly, the atlas will take its rightful place among the fundamental social research concerning the problems of civilisational development. The practical part of the work will fill the gap and "black holes" in the empirical data, thus allowing a better understanding of modernisation processes "from above" and "from below".

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