The effect of geographical position and employment fluctuations on rural settlement trends

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DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL SETTLEMENTS IN THE BALTIC REGION

THE EFFECT OF GEOGRAPHICAL POSITION AND EMPLOYMENT FLUCTUATIONS ON RURAL SETTLEMENT TRENDS

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Structural changes in the economy and spatial and inter-settlement differences in living standards and quality of life lead to fundamental alterations in the national settlement system. Settlement polarisation is gathering momentum, along with the movement of rural population from Russia's east and north to its southern and metropolitan regions. These processes benefit urban agglomerations. Typological differences between regional settlement systems, still poorly understood but essential for strategic and spatial planning, are growing. This article draws on the concept of the geographical demographic situation; it uses official statistics on Russian regions and Kaliningrad municipalities and settlements to explore the connection between rural settlement trends and employment fluctuations caused by structural shifts in Russian regional economies. It is shown how settlement polarisation affects differences in settlement trends of meso- and microdistrict levels. Regions are identified that have a capacity for rural-urban migration and corresponding rural employment structure and trends.

Keywords:
rural population, Russia, Kaliningrad region, population density, settlement pattern changes, employment rate

Introduction

There are much fewer studies into rural settlements in Russia than into urban ones. However, they do exist. For instance, Sergey Kovalev undertook extensive research into rural settlements as early as the 1960s [1]; Kazys Šešelgis proposed the concept of a unified settlement system [2], which was further elaborated by

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Boris Khorev [3]. Tatyana Zaslavskaya led a comprehensive study of rural migration, focusing on changes in rural settlement [4]. Geographical research into Russian rural areas continues, along with the identification of factors in migration, its patterns, and territorial features [6; 7]. The literature pays attention to the characteristics of rural migration processes [8—10] that change the structure of employment [11; 12] and lead to shifts in the economy [13—15]. A theoretical framework for the development of rural settlement systems is lacking, along with a typology of such systems and visions of future for each type, save for postulations of settlement polarisation and proposals to bridge the gap between standards of living in rural and urban areas, strengthen the role of smaller towns, diversify incomes, etc.

The economic and social conditions of rural development changed as the administrative-command system collapsed. Although villages require a new ekistic concept, the primary focus is on geourbanism, which has replaced population and settlement geography in the geography and regional studies curriculum. This article explores factors affecting rural settlement and some of its meso- and microdistrict features, placing them in the context of rural economic development. We believe that our findings will be of broad use when conducting feasibility studies for the general principles of urban settlement concepts suiting the new socio-economic conditions.

Methods

This study draws on the concept of the regional geographical-demographic situation [16; 17], which links demographic processes to socio-economic factors such as employment fluctuations in the agrarian sector — agriculture, hunting, forestry, logging, and fishery. Methodologically, we attempt to identify qualitative characteristics of rural settlement, using a meso- and microdistrict typology. We employ data from Rosstat on Russian regions and from Kaliningradstat on changes in the average village population. Two-way classification, economic mapping, and graph-based methods were used to process the data.

Meso-district differences in rural settlement

Population density is a principal factor affecting rural settlement trends. Although a high population density is naturally a result of earlier rapid growth, the distribution of regions according to natural increase and net migration has changed in the new socio-economic conditions. The coefficient of correlation between the population density in 2020 and the population change in 1989—2020 is 0.65 (a strong correlation is the absolute value of above 0.7). Another measure directly connected to rural population change is the average annual temperature in the region; the correlation coefficient is 0.63.

Grouping Russian regions by population density and change (Table 1, Fig. 1) sheds light on the spatial features of rural settlement.

Table 1

Russian regions by rural population change and density

People per sq. m.б 2020	2020, % of 1989 values			
	79.9 and fewer	80.0—99.9	100.0—109.9	110.0 and more
30.0—64.9 people per sq. m.	—	—	Moscow region	Republic of Ingushetia, Chechnya, Crimea, Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria, Adygeya, North Ossetia-Alania; Krasnodar region
10.0—24.9 people per sq. m.	Republic of Mordovia and Chuvashia; Voronezh, Bryansk, Kursk, Tambov regions	Republic of Tatarstan; Belgorod, Lipetsk, Tula, Vladimir regions	Republics of Bashkortostan, Udmurtia; Stavropol krai; Rostov, Samara regions	Republic of Karachay-Cherkessia; Kaliningrad region
5.0—9.9 people per sq. m.	Penza, Kaluga, Ulyanovsk, Ryazan, Smolensk regions	Oryol region; Republic of Mari El; Altai krai; Ivanovo, Chelyabinsk, Yaroslavl, Saratov, Volgograd regions	Leningrad, Astrakhan, Orenburg regions	—
1.0—4.9 people per sq. m.	Kurgan, Omsk, Tver, Pskov, Kirov, Novgorod, Kostroma, Vologda regions; Jewish autonomous region	Republic of Kalmykia; Perm, Primorsky krais; Kemerovo, Novosibirsk, Tymen (excluding the autonomous region) regions	Republics of Khakassia, Altai; Sverdlovsk region	—
0.01—0.99 people per sq. m.	Republics of Karelia, Komi; Zabaikalsky, Khabarovsk, Krasnoyarsk, Kamchatka krais; Sakhalin, Amur, Arkhangelsk (excluding the Nenets autonomous region), Murmansk, Magadan regions; Yamal-Nenets, Nenets, Chukotka autonomous regions	Republics of Tyva, Sakha (Yakutia); Irkuts, Tomsk regions	Khanty-Mansi autonomous region — Yugra	—

Comment: 82 Russian regions were considered, excluding Moscow, St Petersburg, and Sevastopol.

Prepared by the authors based on data from Boldyrev, B.A. Itogi perepisi naseleniya SSSR [USSR census records]. Moscow: Finansy i statistika, 1990; *Regiony Rossii. Sotsialno-ekonomicheskie pokazateli 2020 [Russian regions. Socio-economic indicators]*. 2020. Moscow: Rosstat.

In the top right-hand cell of the table, there are regions of the North Caucasian and Southern federal districts distinguished by a high population density and a rapid population increase. Their situation is a product of the traditionally high replacement rate in the republics of North Caucasus and positive net migration in the Republic of Crimea and the Krasnodar krai. The rural population is growing, albeit at a slower pace, in the Moscow region. Regions with the lowest population density are in the bottom cells. These territories are located in the east of the country and its European north, where the rural population is declining. In most regions, the rural population decreased by 20 per cent in 1989—2020.

The rural population grew in only three regions with a population density of 1.0—4.9 and 10.0—24.9 people per sq. km. Territories with a high density (10.0—24.9 people, all in the European part of the country) are more evenly distributed according to population change. Still, there are more rural population losers (eleven regions) than gainers (seven regions).

In 1989—2020, the rural population decreased by 7.4 per cent nationwide and by more than 20 per cent in 34 regions. Nefedova and Mkrtchyan carried out a careful analysis to identify the reasons behind this decline [6, 11]. There are two chief reasons for rural migration. The first one is the striving for better living and social conditions often found in cities or milder climates. The other is the lack of jobs in rural areas — a result of the organisational and technological transformations brought about by the market transition.

Let us now turn to the effect of fluctuations in agricultural employment on rural-urban migration. Bychenko and Shabanov [18] cogently note that an increasingly smaller proportion of the rural population is employed in agriculture. Yet, their thesis that 'agriculture has gradually ceased to be the principal industry in rural areas' seems questionable: we believe that agriculture has lost some, but not all, of its significance. The main reason for a decrease in agricultural employment among the rural population is not the increase in the share of the working-age population in rural areas (which rose by 15 per cent in 1990—2009 [18]), but changes in the structure of agricultural producers (large companies, farmsteads, and smallholdings).

The main factor is the decrease in the number of people employed in agriculture; the decline was 31 per cent[1] from 1990 to 2004. This process continues. Employment in agriculture, hunting, forestry, and fishery decreased by 36 per cent in

[1] Prepared by the authors based on data from *The economy of the RSFSR in 1990*. Moscow: Republican Information and Publishing Centre. 1991. P.109; *Regiony Rossii. Sotsialno-ekonomicheskie pokazateli 2005 [Russian regions. Socio-economic indicators 2005]*. Moscow: Rosstat. 2006. P. 84.

2005—2019.[2] The number of people employed in crop and livestock production and hunting decreased by 6 per cent from 2017 to 2019, just as it did across the agrarian sector.

These changes are a consequence of the diminishing role of farmsteads in agricultural production and the growing contribution of highly mechanised enterprises requiring less manual labour. New non-agricultural jobs are few because of competition from towns and cities offering higher profit margins. Alternative activities that cannot be pursued in cities, such as eco-tourism, are slow to develop. Commuting is flourishing on the outskirts of cities, whilst rural-urban migration continues in the periphery.

Although the exhaustion of resources for rural-urban workforce redistribution was postulated as early as the beginning of the 2000s (and the process is gaining speed), this statement seems to require verification by calculation. In 2017, rural-urban migration in Russia achieved 97.9 thousand people; in 2018, 101.3 thousand. However, the rural population of Russia grew through international arrivals: net migration was 50.6 thousand in 2017 and 31.8 thousand in 2018.[3]

Although, when 2020—2021 become available, the quantitative characteristics of migration will change (the Covid-19 restrictions are to blame), the general rural-urban migration patterns are likely to persist. The ratio between the proportion of people employed in the agrarian sector (including agriculture) and the share in the rural population supports this assumption. Across the country, this ratio is 26.5 per cent for the agrarian sector and 23.4 per cent for agriculture. The differences between federal districts are substantial (Table 2). The proportion is the highest in North Caucasus (35.2 per cent), with most agrarian workers employed in agriculture, as is the case in the Southern federal district. The North-West, Siberia, and the Far East specialise in forestry and logging, whilst fishery is the principal industry in many villages in the Far East and, to a lesser extent, the North-West.

[2] Prepared by the authors based on data from *Regiony Rossii. Sotsialno-ekonomicheskie pokazateli [Russian regions. Socio-economic indicators]* 2006. Moscow: Rosstat. 2007. P. 106; *Regiony Rossii. Sotsialno-ekonomicheskie pokazateli 2020 [Russian regions. Socio-economic indicators 2020]*. Moscow: Rosstat. 2020. P. 142.

[3] *Demograficheskiy ezhegodnik Rossii [The demographic yearbook of Russia]*. 2019. Moscow: Rosstat, 2019. P. 219.

Table 2

Employment in the agrarian sector, per cent of the rural population, 2019

Russia, federal districts	Employed individuals as % of the share in the rural population			
	Agrarian sector	Including		
		Crop production, animal husbandry, hunting and related services	Forestry and logging	Fishery
Russia	26.5	23.4	2.4	0.7
Central	24.4	22.3	1.8	0.3
Northwestern	24.7	15.0	7.6	2.1
including Kaliningrad region	21.1	17.1	1.5	2.5
Southern	28.7	27.7	0.3	0.7
North Caucasus	35.2	34.6	0.3	0.3
Volga	27.2	24.9	2.1	0.2
Ural	20.8	17.0	3.3	0.5
Siberian	29.1	23.7	5.0	0.4
Far Eastern	26.0	16.0	5.3	4.7

Prepared based on data from *Regiony Rossii. Sotsialno-ekonomicheskie pokazateli 2020 [Russian regions. Socio-economic indicators 2020]*. Moscow: Rosstat. 2020.

Rural employment becomes more diverse when viewed at the level of regions (Fig. 1). This diversity should be taken into account when forecasting rural settlement trends. Below we examine the situation in regions with a rate of employment in the agrarian sector above 40 per cent.

In the Republic of Mordovia and the Tambov and Volgograd regions, over 50 per cent of the rural population works in the agrarian sector. In the Republic of Kabardin-Balkaria and the Omsk and Voronezh regions, this proportion is 40 per cent. In the Magadan region, it is 71 per cent, with fishery being the principal industry. This proportion is so substantial because local economically active individuals reside primarily in the urban areas. The fishery is a major employer in the Kamchatka krai, where the ratio in question is above 40 per cent, just as it is in the Kirov and Astrakhan regions. In the two latter territories, agriculture prevails, with a focus on forestry and logging in Kirov and fishery in Astrakhan.

If agriculture develops through an increase in workforce productivity, regions with a high rate of employment in agriculture will boost rural-urban migration, as more people will head to cities looking for a job. Regions where a small proportion of the rural population is involved in the agrarian sector and other employment opportunities are few may also contribute to the movement to cities. This does not apply to the Krasnodar krai and the Republic of Crimea, whose rural residents may take jobs in tourism and agriculture.

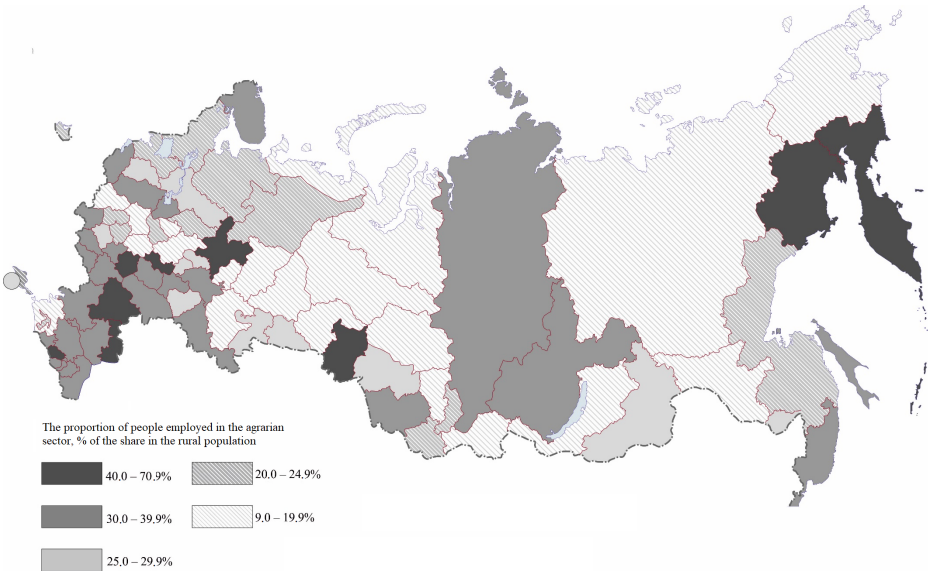

Fig. 1. Employment in the agrarian sector as a per cent of the share in the rural population

Prepared based on data from Regiony Rossii. *Sotsialno-ekonomicheskie pokazateli 2020 [Russian regions. Socio-economic indicators]*. Moscow: Rosstat. 2020.

Microdistrict rural settlement trends in the Kaliningrad region

Nefedova points out that suburb-periphery differences are the key to the organisation of rural areas [19]. These variations cause the intra-regional gap between the suburbs of large cities and their peripheries to grow. Affected by many factors, the average village population changes differently in suburbs and peripheries. Let us look at the processes taking place in the Kaliningrad settlement system. An exclave, the region provides a good model for investigating a settlement system.

Ekistic processes and their link to economic development have been studied in the Kaliningrad region since the 1970s, and research into rural settlement and population continues in the 21st century [21—25]. Special attention has been paid to regional agricultural development [26—30], which heavily influences settlement. Although the literature has identified general polarisation trends in rural settlement and agricultural production, the features of population change in villages remain poorly understood. Moreover, the maps below and their analysis aimed at an accurate reflection of changes in rural settlement constitute the first attempt of its kind.

Rural settlement trends in the Kaliningrad region have similarities with those in Central Russia, but the situation in the exclave has distinctive features. A marked difference between suburban and peripheral areas is a clear similarity, whilst the mild climate, a high urban and rural population density, closely packed

settlements, and the abundance of paved roads make up the uniqueness of the region. Kaliningrad has positive net migration figures, with many arrivals in rural areas, where housing costs are lower than in cities. In 2020, the rural population was growing almost as fast as the urban population.

The urban and rural population of the Kaliningrad region increased in 1992—2020 (Fig. 2), whilst both declined across the nation, rural areas suffering the heaviest losses.

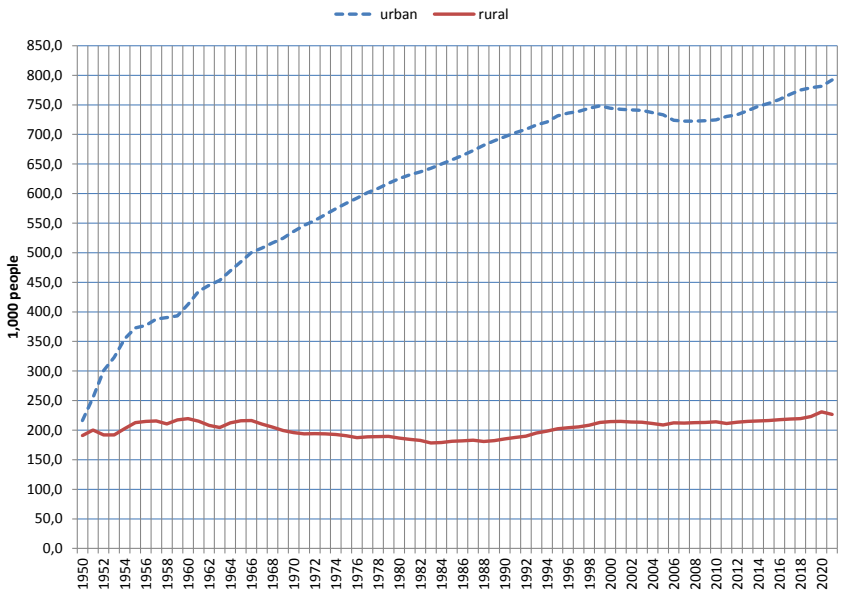

Fig. 2. Rural and urban population change in the Kaliningrad region, 1950—2020

Prepared by the authors based on *Demograficheskiy ezhegodnik 2010 [The demographic yearbook 2010]*. Kaliningrad: Kaliningradstat, 2010; *Demograficheskiy ezhegodnik 2018 [The demographic yearbook 2018]*. *https://kaliningrad.gks.ru/population (accessed 10.02.2021); Kaliningradskaya oblast v tsifrakh [Kaliningrad region in digits]. 2020. 1. Kaliningrad: Kaliningradstat. 2020.

The number of people employed in the agrarian sector of the region remained practically unchanged in 1990—2005, reaching 48.8 thousand people in 2005. By 2019, it more than halved to 22.5 thousand people (or 46.1 per cent of the 2005 level, compared to the national average of 63.6 per cent; the rural population decline in the Kaliningrad region was more rapid than across the country[4]). In 2017—2019, the reduction was 12.5 per cent, compared to the Russian average of 5.8 per cent.[5] The number of individuals employed in agriculture fell by 10.1 per cent; in forestry and logging, 24.6 per cent; in fishery, 19.3 per cent.

[4] *Regiony Rossii. Sotsialno-ekonomicheskie pokazateli 2002 [Russian regions. Socio-economic indicators 2020]*. Moscow: Goskomstat. 2002. *Regiony Rossii. Sotsialno-ekonomicheskie pokazateli 2020 [Russian regions. Socio-economic indicators 2020]*. Moscow: Rosstat. 2020.

[5] Average annual size of the economically active population (calculated based on data integration) since 2017. URL: https://fedstat.ru/indicator/58994 (accessed 13.04.2021).

Although fishery provides more agrarian jobs in the region than it does on average across the country, it is rapidly losing its significance as a principal employer. Once a leader in the Soviet fishing industry, the region is becoming less and less visible in trade.

The decline in the number of people employed in agriculture is due to a growing concentration of production at large mechanised enterprises, which need fewer workers than farmsteads do. This process is more pronounced in Kaliningrad than across the country (Table 3). The rate of agricultural production growth in the region is above the national average: the territory accounted for 0.54 per cent of Russian agricultural output in 2005 and 0.70 per cent in 2019.

Table 3

Changes in the structure of agricultural output by the type of producer, 2005—2019

Type of produce	Type of producer					
	Agricultural enterprises		Smallholdings		Farms	
	2005	2019	2005	2019	2005	2019
Livestock and poultry						
Russia	46.2	79.8	51.4	17.1	2.4	3.1
Kaliningrad region	67.6	92.8	28.8	5.7	3.6	1.5
Milk						
Russia	45.1	54.1	51.8	37.4	3.1	8.5
Kaliningrad region	38.4	59.5	57.1	35	4.5	5.5
Grain						
Russia	80.6	70.1	1.1	0.7	18.3	29.2
Kaliningrad region	78.9	90.1	0.4	0.7	20.7	9.2
Potatoes						
Russia	8.4	21	88.8	65.7	2.8	13.3
Kaliningrad region	11.9	27.9	72.2	50	16	22.1
Vegetable						
Russia	18.7	28.1	74.4	51.7	6.9	20.2
Kaliningrad region	5.5	14.1	83.1	54.1	11.4	31.8

Prepared by the authors based on data from *Regiony Rossii. Sotsialno-ekonomicheskie pokazateli 2020 [Russian regions. Socio-economic indicators]*. 2020. Moscow: Rosstat. 2020.

Intra-regional differences in settlement trends are substantial and correspond to the polarisation patterns. In 2010—2020, the population growth rate was high in the regional centre and even higher in its suburbs (Table 4, Fig. 3). People migrated from remote suburbs and especially the periphery. A distinctive feature of the territory is a higher rate of population change in rural areas than in towns and cities across all the three zones — near and remote suburbs and the periphery.

Table 4

Rural population change in the Kaliningrad region, 2010—2020

Zone of Kaliningrad region	Population, people, as of 01.01.2020	2020, % of 2010	
		Urban	Rural
Kaliningrad region, total	1012.5	107.6	107.1
Kaliningrad	489.4	113.3	—
Near suburbs	257.7	113.4	114.9
Remote suburbs	65.8	93.9	97.5
Periphery	191.7	91.9	95.1

Prepared by the authors based on *Demograficheskiy ezhegodnik 2010 [The demographic yearbook 2010]*. Kaliningrad: Kaliningradstat, 2010; Population of the Kaliningrad region as of 01.01.2020. URL: https://kaliningrad.gks.ru/population (accessed 10.02.2021)

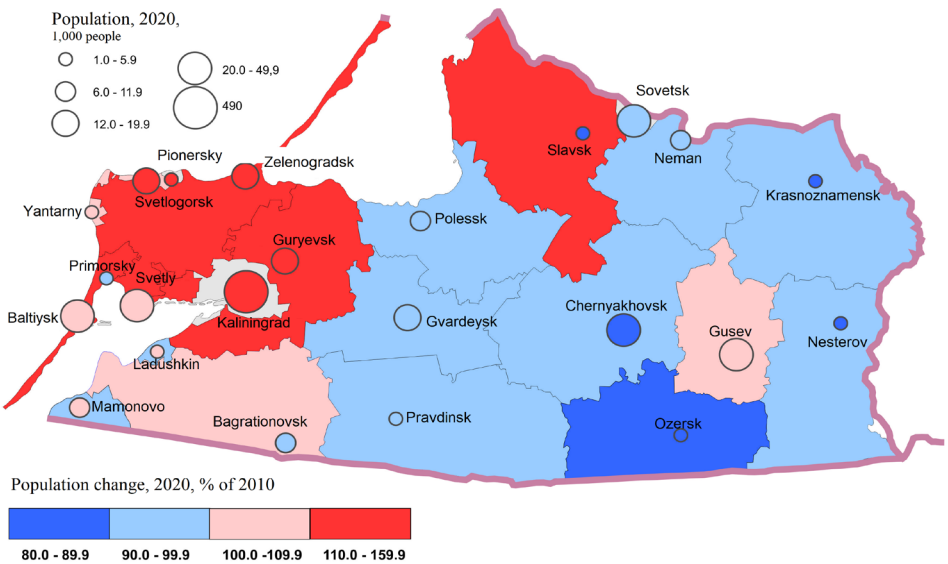

Fig. 3. Population of towns and cities at the beginning of 2020;
urban and rural population change, 2020,% of 2010

Prepared by the authors based on *Demograficheskiy ezhegodnik 2010 [The demographic yearbook 2010]*. Kaliningrad: Kaliningradstat, 2010; Population of the Kaliningrad region as of 01.01.2020, URL: https://kaliningrad.gks.ru/population (accessed 10.02.2021).

All villages and rural municipalities of the near suburban zone have a high rate of employment outside the agrarian sector; residents commute to Kaliningrad and nearby towns. Economically active individuals work primarily in the villages where they live — at service enterprises or local industrial facilities. Agriculture accounts for most jobs in the other municipalities. A similar conclusion can be drawn from data in Table 5 showing the ratio between the contribution of a municipality to regional agricultural output and its share in the rural population.

Table 5

Municipal districts*	Share in the rural population, %	Contribution of the municipality to regional agricultural output, % of its share in the rural population
Near suburbs		
Bagrationovsk**	11.84	45.9
Baltiysk	0.68	62.8
Zelenogradsk	9.59	52.1
Guryevsk	22.52	59.0
Svetly	3.09	15.2
Svetlogorsk***	2.40	17.0
Remote suburbs		
Gvardeysk	7.01	67.8
Polessk	4.96	150.5****
Pravdinsk	6.43	191.1
Periphery		
Gusev	4.00	184.7
Krasnoznamensk	3.78	97.0
Neman	3.35	156.2
Nesterov	4.78	233.9
Ozersk	4.17	158.0
Slavsk	6.60	151.1
Chernyakhovsk	4.80	120.5

* Excluding Kaliningrad, Pionersky, and Sovetsk (no rural population).

** Including the Ladushkin and Mamonovo districts.

*** The Yantarny district.

**** Values above 100 per cent are shown in semibold.

Prepared by the authors based on data from *Demograficheskiy ezhegodnik Kaliningradskoy oblasti 2018 [The Demographic Yearbook of the Kaliningrad region 2018]*. Kaliningrad: Kaliningradstat. 2018. URL: https://kaliningrad.gks.ru/population (accessed 10.02.2021); *Munitsipalnye obrazovaniia Kaliningradskoi oblasti. Sotsialno-ekonomicheskoe razvitie v 2015—2019 godakh [Municipalities of the Kaliningrad region. Socio-economic development in 2015—2019]*. Kaliningrad: Kaliningradstat. 2020.

Table 6, Figs. 4 and 5 demonstrate the spatial features and trends in rural settlement in the suburbs and periphery of the Kaliningrad region.

Table 6

Rural population in the suburban and periphery municipalities of the Kaliningrad regions, 2010—2020

Average village population	Population, 2020, % of 2010	
	Guryevsk and Zelenogradsk suburban municipalities	Krasnoznamensk and Nesterov periphery municipalities
2000–5999	132.8	—
1000–1999	125.2	102.3
500–999	130.1	90.8
200–499	105.6	89.8
100–199	107.4	91.5
50–99	104.6	91.8
0–49	102.3	86
Total	121.4	91.9

Prepared by the authors based on data from *The urban and rural population of the Kaliningrad region as of 1 January 2020*. Kaliningrad: Kaliningradstat. 2020. URL: https://kaliningrad.gks.ru/population (accessed 25.02.2021).

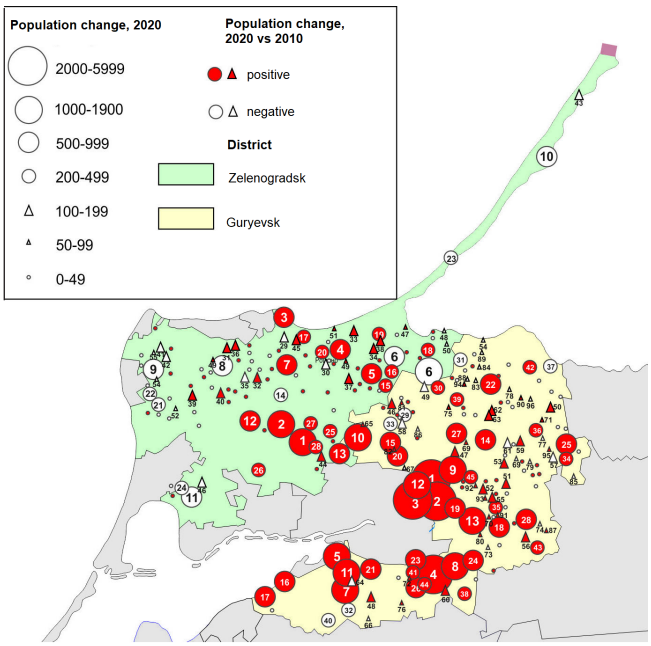

Fig. 4. Rural settlement trends in the Guryevsk and Zelenogradsk municipal districts of the Kaliningrad region, 2010—2020

Prepared by the authors based on data from *The urban and rural population of the Kaliningrad region as of 1 January 2020*. Kaliningrad: Kaliningradstat. 2020. URL: https://kaliningrad.gks.ru/population (accessed 25.02.2021).

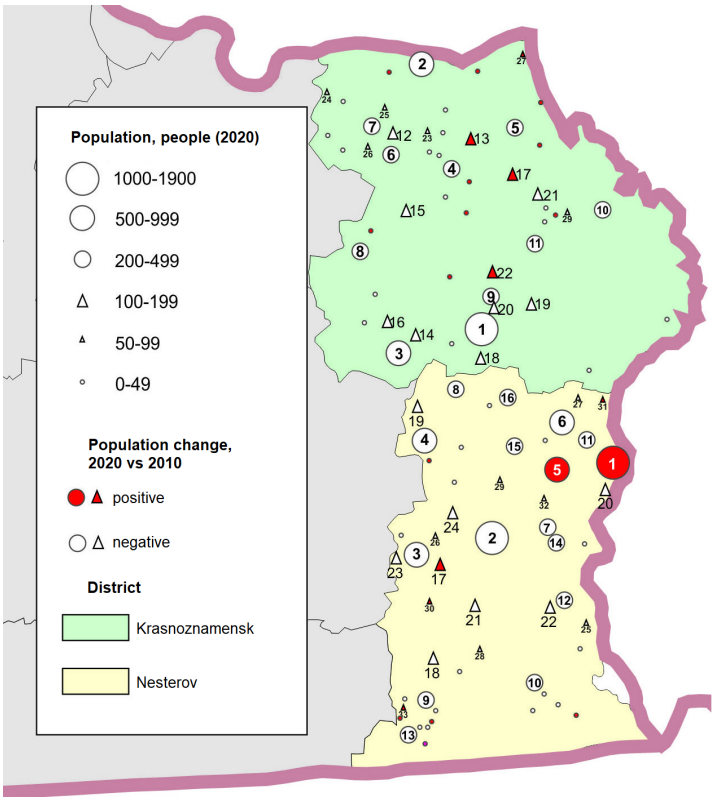

Fig. 5. Rural settlement trends in the Krasnoznamensk and Nesterov municipal districts of the Kaliningrad region, 2010—2020

Prepared by the authors based on data from *The urban and rural population of the Kaliningrad region as of 1 January 2020*. Kaliningrad: Kaliningradstat. 2020. URL: https://kaliningrad.gks.ru/population (accessed 25.02.2021).

Settlement trends are qualitatively different in the suburban (Fig. 4) and periphery (Fig. 5) zones. In the suburbs, all villages became more populous in 2010—2020. As expected, larger settlements grew more impressively than smaller ones. In the periphery, only the '1,000—1,999' group witnessed a population increase; decline occurred in one village in each district; a settlement at the Russian-Lithuanian border checkpoint Chernyshevskoe-Kybartai gained residents. All four villages of the '2,000—5,000' group and eight out of the nine settlements of the '1,000—2,000' category saw a population increase in the suburban Guryevsk district. In the Zelenogradsk district, both '1,000—2,000 people' villages gained residents (Fig. 4). All the larger settlements are within 25 km from the regional centre, many bordering the city.

Location in the suburban zone does not automatically guarantee population growth. A decline was observed in many villages in the west of the Zelenogradsk

district, which have poorer transport links than settlements along the thoroughfares linking Kaliningrad with the seaside resorts. Lying far from the regional centre, the villages of the Curonian Spit are losing population.

Bordering Kaliningrad, the Guryevsk district has a smaller proportion of villages losing population than the Zelenogradsk district. Such settlements are usually small and located far from main roads and Kaliningrad.

In 2010—2020, the population declined in many periphery villages — 38 out of 53 in the Krasnoznamensk district and 42 out of 53 in the Nesterov district. The administrative centres of the districts also lost residents. Most villages with a growing or stable population are located in the northern parts of the territories, which have better infrastructure and lie closer to the administrative centres.

The Kaliningrad regional policy has prioritised support for the economic development of periphery municipalities. A soft-loan programme, Vostok, was launched in 11 eastern municipalities in 2020.[6] Investment projects eligible for the programme can receive 50m roubles for seven or ten years (the latter applies to agrarian operations) at an interest rate of 1 per cent per year. The region allocated 150m roubles to support the initiative. It is hopefully the first of many measures that will comprise a comprehensive periphery development programme for Kaliningrad. Similar programmes should be launched in other Russian regions suffering from economic and settlement polarisation.

Conclusion

Many districts have sufficient workforce to fuel ongoing rural-urban migration replenishing urban human resources. Settlement polarisation will continue until working and living conditions in rural areas can rival the city lifestyle (and surpass it in ecological terms). Without turning into towns, villages should develop unique and appealing environments.

Better working and living conditions can be attained in rural areas by taking advantage of the scientific and technological revolution, which mostly has benefitted cities so far. Rural development strategies will depend on the socio-economic type of the region, its geographical location, and natural resources. Further research is needed to provide a scientific rationale for rural development proposals. It is essential to devise a theoretical and methodological framework for georuralism, which remains poorly developed compared to geourabanism, in line with the new socio-economic conditions. Concepts for settlement improvement

[6] The Vostok soft-loan programme resumed in the Kaliningrad region. URL: https://xn—90aifddrld7a.xn — p1ai/novosti/news/v-kaliningradskoy-oblasti-vozobnovlyaetsya-programma-lgotnogo-finansirovaniya-vostok/ (accessed 23.04.2021).

in rural areas should be worked out for various types of regions with different natural resources, socio-economic performance, and ecology. This article examined some typological differences between Russian regions and Kaliningrad microdistricts. It is crucial to draw on the experience of Russian and international territories that have made progress in solving rural development problems. Today's ecological agenda should encourage research into rural areas as a healthier alternative to urban environments.

The focus of strategic and spatial planning should be shifted to the periphery in the Kaliningrad region and most of Central Russia. It is vital to encourage and support local businesses while prioritising the development of social, transport, and utility infrastructure. However, migration from the rural periphery to the Kaliningrad agglomeration will continue, and measures for accommodating migrants will be requisite.

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