

# Development of small Russian towns in the 19<sup>th</sup>–21<sup>st</sup> centuries: socioeconomic factors

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**Abstract.** This research is focused on small Russian towns and the socioeconomic aspects of their development in the 19<sup>th</sup> through 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Several towns, including Mytishi, Yuzovka, Naro-Fominsk, Myshkin, etc., serve as examples employed to assess the practice of founding townships, to analyze the economic, social, cultural, and political conditions of their functioning, and to make projections for their future development. The methods, employed by this research project, consist in the look-back analysis of sources and the analysis of statistics, including the relevant urban demography. The main conclusion, made by the author, is the need for the revival of small Russian towns in the post-industrial era through their assumption of supplementary administrative functions against the background of continuing de-industrialization and the shutdown of the township-forming production facilities. The author believes that the conversion of small towns into tourist resort areas is a debatable practice. The author addresses this issue in the Discussion section of the article. He offers his pros and cons in respect of these actions. The academic novelty of the article consists in the provision of the novel data concerning the development of small towns as the urban districts of major megalopolises.

## 1 Introduction

According to the sociological studies, today Russia has up to 460 small towns, and their specialization varies [1]. Some of them are considered to be the towns of research, others are referred to as classical factory based towns, historic centres, resorts and tourist areas.

Small towns of Eastern Europe represent the subject of research addressed in this article. The author does his best to analyze the development of small and mid-size towns at the time when the industrial society is formed. The author draws particular attention to the economic environment of the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, which produced impact on the Russian urban industry. Therefore, the time frame for our research is limited to the beginning through the final step of the short period of domestic monopolistic capitalism, followed by the Soviet industrialization. The latter is responsible for the economic problems to be solved in the post-Soviet period. These problems are to be tackled by factory based towns. Our study is particularly relevant due to the pressing need to solve the problems of the socioeconomic development of factory based towns. Changes in the urban demography and cultural diversity

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have destroyed the integrity and unity of a town as a social organism in the present-day post-industrial era. Some small and mid-size settlements fail to solve these problems, and, therefore, according to the contemporary analysts, they collapse as socioeconomic entities. "In the coming twenty years, these towns will be ruined, if the current population reduction trend remains the same" [1]. Both small and big towns experience difficulties. Detroit is under discussion as the model case of an urban financial crisis. Its position is so devastating that its authorities even think about its dissolution [2]. In March 2013, the town was exposed to external management due to its colossal debt of fourteen billion US dollars. Nonetheless, some industrial towns do not want to go down the same road as Detroit; rather, they look for their niches in the present-day differentiation of labour.

One may speak about the global nature of industrial towns (or factory based towns, the majority of which are small and mid-size). Therefore, in the nearest future, not only Russian, but also the majority of European and some North American towns (particularly, industrial centres) will face the final stage of their expansion into adjacent rural areas, and their population figures will gradually go down.

## 2 Literature review

In this article, the author addresses the problems of history and sociology of urban development. Therefore, the author draws attention to the works, covering these areas of knowledge. Social problems are tightly interlaced with economic issues, as the economy, namely, the production industry, serves as the material basis of public life. This article covers the works, focused on the problems, which are common for contemporary urbanism, as well as those research projects, which are focused on small towns. This pattern is in full compliance with that of any theoretical top-down research.

Cities and towns are analyzed in several research projects, implemented by sociologists, architectural technologists, and urbanists. Within the framework of this research, the author has compared the development environment of small towns against the background of socio-cultural changes in Western Europe, on the one hand, and in Russia, on the other hand. Urban planning features in the EU are analyzed by I.N. Burakova [3], Z.I. Ivanova [4], V.L. Glazychev [5,6], S.A. Zhabina [7], and others. Most of them seek the harmony of social interaction in the urban space. E.V. Revina brings up the issue of national identity in the urban culture; she considers the town as a complex, systemic and multilayer subject, which uncovers itself in the socio-cultural perspective [8]. Ch. Landry is a major Western urban sociologist, who has managed to identify the contradictions of urban development [9]. Rational design as a method of arranging comfortable social spaces and strengthening social solidarity within urban population groups, serves as the subject of analysis performed by J. Gehl, a Dutch urban designer [10], and W. Rybszynski, a Canadian theorist of architecture [11]. The results of the analysis of Western works on urban planning and regulation are available in the books written by V.A. Ilyichev [12], H. Delitz [13], and others.

The works on comfortable environments in small towns cover some of the research projects, which neglect the idea of reviving small towns (B.G. Ivanovsky) [14]. The analysis of the extent of elaboration of this issue has proven a pressing need to study the architectural planning space in a small town.

## 3 Materials and methods

Let's outline the theoretical and methodological bases of this research. The author thinks it necessary to identify the extent of analysis of the subject of research. The analysis in question will employ deduction, aimed at the appropriate positioning of the economies of small towns

within the overall socio-economic system [15]. The author employs deduction in combination with inductive generalizations within the framework of various branches of economy.

This study represents a combination of elements of theoretical synthesis and empiric analysis. That's why the author addresses the statistical data and the findings of historic and historic-economic analyses. The author's objective is to reconstruct the development history of the urban civilization and urbanism as a phenomenon. The subject of research determines the research methods. On top of the retrospective analysis of sources, the author has also employed the analog approach, which is used to compare particular cases, typical for large-scale and textile industries. The author has also employed induction to be able to perform the generalization of the role of industry in the development of small towns. The study also takes account of the poll findings, generated by the All-Russian Public Opinion Centre and based on the poll conducted in 2015.

In the Methods section of this article, the author identifies the extent and content of the notion of small towns. Population figures, serving as the criterion for labeling some town as small, vary in different countries. A popular electronic dictionary offers a definition of an urban settlement, and this definition complies with the one of a small town. This definition takes account of both the population figures and occupation of residents: most of them must be employed in the production industry, public transport, resort industry, rather than agriculture [16]. The population of a small town should not exceed 50 thousand residents. A small town should have, at least, 5-10 thousand residents, although depopulation, registered in some small towns, makes it possible to include towns having lower population figures into the category of "small towns". Small towns are followed by mid-size ones. Their population figures vary from 50 to 100 thousand residents.

As this study covers the past of small and mid-size towns and their development patterns, the author of this study employs the retrospective analysis of sources.

## 4 Results

Let's identify the position of small and mid-size towns in the socioeconomic environment of the post-industrial society. What we have now is the abandonment of development paradigms, typical for the earlier industrial era. Small towns often assume the responsibilities of neighborhood centres. In the 18<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the development pattern of these settlements was mainly driven by the development of workhouses and, later, by factories. In the industrial era, settlements and industrial villages were founded in the close proximity to industrial facilities, including mining, textile, woodworking, metal-processing and other plants. Driveways did matter. An excellent geographical position, close to the trade routes, contributed to the development of urban centres. When markets were developed enough in particular spots, merchants and craftsmen sought permanent settlement there, and that was how towns were founded. The newly developed Russian textile industry gave birth to Shuya, Pavlovsky Posad, Fominskoye, Orekhovo-Zuyevo, Ivanovo, and Kokhma in the non-black earth area of the country. Novorossiya was rich for coal, and the town of Yuzovka was founded there, It was named after J.J. Hughes, the founder of the mining industry. He initiated the construction of the backbone enterprise there in 1869 [16].

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, urban settlements were converted into railway stations. Kochetovka, a railway hub, turned into a small industrial settlement. It was built in 1876. Railroads determined the positions of small towns back then. The so-called "island pattern" was employed to place first and second class stations close to railways and the so-called "riverbank" pattern was used to place third and fourth class stations along railroads [17]. The construction of steel railroads was particularly intensive after the 19<sup>th</sup> of February, 1861. The illustrated railroad encyclopedia says: "The abolition of serfdom gave way to the

intensive construction of railroads.” [16] In the 60ies and 70ies of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the construction of railroads was initiated by M.H. Reiter, the Minister of finance, who was willing to deliver Russian bread to Western Europe and to earn some cash for the Russian treasury. Indeed, Russian grain, linen, timber, dairy products were then delivered to major centres of trade by the Russian railroads. Moscow was a major trade centre at the time.

Besides, the construction of railroads by the empires pursued strategic military objectives, and they did it best to connect their regions by railroad lines. Europe built a railroad from Berlin to Baghdad; Russia built its Trans-Siberian line, as well as several other railroad lines to connect its agricultural and industrial areas and the borders of the Russian Empire [18].

Construction of the railroad from Moscow to Sergiyev Posad and Yaroslavl through Mytischi was the key moment in the history of this small town and the capital. I.F. Mamontov, father of a famous philanthropist, authored the idea of its construction. The Northern railroad, which served as a spur to Yaroslavl, was put into operation in 1862 [18]. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, railroad transportation boosted the development of the Russian industry in many regions. This short period of prosperity of the Russian monopolistic capital is famous for its so-called “non-core” assets, accumulated by the Russian railroad companies. For example, “Ryazan-Urals railroad” joint stock company launched a shipping business: cargo barges and passenger ships travelled along the Ural river, while the Saratov fleet, owned by the Ryazan-Urals railroad company, used the Volga river to delivered its loads. The joint stock company of the Armavir-Tuapse railroad obtained the license to mine coal, extract crude oil and produce timber in the days of WWI. The company management grew experimental orchards and vegetable gardens to improve grain brands [19]. The progressive role of railroads for the adjacent areas, including small towns, is evident.

The availability of a railroad hub, or “a passenger home”, as well as major industrial enterprises, was a turnkey to the development of Metropolitan Mytischi, if compared to other adjacent settlements. In the past, Taininskoe village used to be the local development leader. It had the Church of Annunciation, built in the days of Tsar Alexey Mikhailovich. One can say that the railroad served as the “nursemaid” for local entrepreneurs. Indeed, the earnings of railroad companies grew very fast. In 1969, Mamontov’s earnings reached 13% of the capital expenditures, and by 1895, they had gone up to 42% [19]. Besides, as early as in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, country houses appeared along the railroad. Gradually, some of them found themselves within the town borders. In Mytischi, the first Russian artificial silk factory “Viscosa” was launched. It was put into operation in 1909, and even the events of 1917 failed to interrupt its operation [20].

The town-forming enterprise was founded in Mytischi before 1917. In 1897, the railroad car producer was founded on the bank of the Yauza river. It caused the foundation of an industrial community, which later developed into a town. Its stockholders included S.I. Mamontov, a hereditary honorary citizen, A.I. Barry, an engineer of the US origin, and K.D. Artsybushev, a nobleman [21].

The population of such settlements multiplied, new factory buildings were erected, the infrastructure turned more complex. At the same time, local social creativity turned more complex, and the functions of urban settlements turned more versatile; new crafts and productions emerged. Positions of production facilities were often determined by the access to sources of energy. For example, the textile factories of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries consumed the power of steam and water, therefore, their buildings were erected in the close proximity to rivers, and they had steam engines and boilers. That was why silk mills were constructed on the bank of the Nara river (the tributary of the Oka river) in Nara and Naro-Fominsk settlements (Naro-Fominsk has the status of a town today), and textile factories were founded along the Moskva river close to the capital [22]. For example, the Tryokhgornaya textile mill was built on the bank of the Presnya river, and wool and spinning factories, owned by the Ganeshin brothers, were built close to the Moskva river [23].

In the 30ies of the 20th century, in the years of the first five-year economic periods, industrial production development caused a rise in the number of industrial towns. Here we can track how the private initiative of founding town-forming production facilities gave way to the same public one, while the Soviet state turned to be the main owner of investment goods. For example, the years of 1925 and 1926 were the turning point for the nationalized railroad car construction facility. In the late 20ies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this production facility was reconstructed, and in the early 30ies the production of underground cars was initiated there. New production premises were built relatively fast. The steam power unit was restructured, the railroad car section was renovated, and the steelmaking facility was organized [21]. New production facilities needed additional personnel. Population figures kept going up. Not coincidentally, on the 17<sup>th</sup> of August, 1925, Mytischki obtained the status of a town to mark the start of its history as Moscow's satellite.

As for the Moscow region, it is noteworthy that some small towns were recently included into New Moscow. Some of them turned into Moscow's closest environs. Kiyevsky town was founded in 1971 in the south-western part of the Moscow region. It was constructed close to the largest European terminal station close to Bekasovo. Later, it was added to Troitsk administrative district [24]. As early as in the 70ies and 80ies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, freight wagons started delivering industrial machines, raw materials, timber, and consumer goods to various destinations from there. This terminal station has been in operation since then. No wonder that the construction of the railroad hub and industrial community was labeled "the Baikal-Amur mainline of the Moscow region". However, the community's infrastructure disappointed the residents. The workers and their families had to live in construction site containers. There were not enough places in the local kindergartens. There was one secondary school in the community for a long time. A lot of time has passed since the foundation of Kiyevsky. Now few of its residents are employed with the local railroad. As the time progressed, the population figures went up, although the infrastructure could not catch up with the residents' needs. It was only after Kiyevsky's incorporation into the New Moscow that the construction of the centre of culture was completed, high-rise buildings were erected, leisure areas were restructured, a stadium was built close to the secondary school building, sports sites and pedestrian roads were organized. However, small towns in the South West of the Moscow Region do not constitute the only example of incorporation by major cities. Kochetovka is now a district of Michurinsk. Similarly, the town of Losinoostrovskoye was incorporated into Moscow in 1960.

Today some factory towns, located outside of the Moscow Region, represent areas of social ill-being because of the shutdown of their core industrial enterprises. The main reasons for the crisis of small towns consist in the falling demand for their products, high transportation rates, and tighter competition.

## 5 Discussion

Here we will discuss the current condition of particular small and mid-size towns, which is the subject of fierce discussions. The core point of debates consists in the patterns for their revival. A factory town is an urban settlement which demonstrates the contradictions of the post-industrial, or, in other words, the information society. The winners are those small towns which can successfully operate within the framework of the digital economy, and only those urban production facilities, that have "non-core" assets can survive.

In the 90ies of the 20th century, the concept of the lack of prospects for one factory towns dominated against the background of the economic and political reforms of that period. The Russian "lack-of-prospect town" is a term similar to the British "ghost town". The availability of these terms in several languages proves the global nature of this problem. The shutdown of town forming enterprises forces residents to move to major settlements, while migration

may accelerate the breakdown of urban communities. It is not surprising, because mere 28% of small towns' residents and 33% of mid-size towns' residents are satisfied with their lives there, while the percentage of satisfied residents in the capital reaches 88%, and about 90% of St. Petersburg's residents are satisfied with their lives [25, 26].

Local authorities take interest in tourism and museums are the sources of economic growth. The town of Myshkin in the Novgorod region serves as a vivid example of successful economic conversion, and the same about Zvenigorod in the Moscow region. Both localities generate leisure areas, including pedestrian streets, nice squares and highways, sports facilities, and museums. Myshkin has museums of cats, mice, and a museum of felt boots. One of these museums displays the only surviving steam boiler, invented by the outstanding Russian engineer V.G. Shukov.

Arrangement of leisure and development centers for children is a special urban development trend. Broadly speaking, the Moscow region is willing both to preserve and to condition small towns and villages. Moreover, the Moscow region multiplies their number. However, the drawback of this pattern is that standard travel destinations are not tailored to any technological breakthroughs, which are the only vehicles capable of assimilating novel technologies and systems (such as railroads) to drastically improve the lives of local residents. Volens nolens, touristic and museum businesses push the social environment into some kind of a technological ghetto and foredooms these areas to technological inferiority.

Our contemporary A.V. Kofanov is the author of the book entitled "Small towns of the Moscow region: condition and prospects", in which he covers the debatable points associated with small and mid-size towns. He believes that their de-industrialization is the key to their success. A.V. Kofanov believes that the abolishment of the industrialization principles of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, accompanied by the development of informal assets, is the only way to succeed in the new environment. However the author does not accept the trend for neo-industrialization, typical for the international economy in the teens of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The author of this article draws particular attention to this trend in his works. The programme for the construction of small towns and settlements in the Moscow region is another subject of discussion. A.V. Kofanov highly appreciates this initiative. According to this author, new towns will never serve as shelters for low income residents. He suggests a combination of socially differentiated layers of the urban community with carefully selected elements of architecture. Towards this end, the town centre must serve as the public and business area to be surrounded by townhouses and leisure areas, having a well-developed transportation infrastructure.

However some features of the urban planning policy are treated as erroneous, or, at least, debatable, as they fail to take account of the country's development features. Even the names of new settlements can't help raising questions, namely "Bremen", "Bristol", and "The Landlord's House". The urban plans of these settlements, based on western standards, are even less acceptable. On the whole, the attempts to arrange the life in the settlements in compliance with the patterns of Western Europe and without any regard for the needs of the Russian society are considered as a failure, particularly, if their architecture does not fit the local landscape. Some authors share this opinion. Any architectural and planning solutions, applicable to towns and rural settlements, must preserve old traditions, typical for the local area. Other authors are sure that elements of French, German, Flemish, and other styles, which are favoured by Russian travelers, may add some allure to the towns and settlements in the Moscow region. It is too early to stop this discussion.

## 6 Conclusions

Let's sum up our ideas and outline the area of research into small towns. In this article, the author considers their origin and history. He offers historic examples and analyzes their

present-day condition. Moreover, the author assesses the role of railroads in the formation of the settlement framework of small towns. The author draws the conclusion that the issue of the prospective development of small towns has not been resolved.

Moreover, nowadays, when the urban civilization is in crisis, small and mid-size towns represent a problem to be resolved by urban planners and architects. Nonetheless, their revival may facilitate the resolution of demographic and urban planning problems. Small towns will be in demand against the background of polluted megalopolises and grave demographic problems. So far, small towns enjoy little attention. Nevertheless, this study has revealed the problem of conversion of the urban industry and the need to convert small towns into tourist and museum centres. The latter is an alternative option for the socio-cultural development of small and mid-size towns.

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