

From the editors

The role of cities in economy, rural development problems and immigrant inflows have long received academic attention. Yet, life is always full of challenges for the research community. In recent years, considerable scholarly interest has been devoted to the way current problems manifest themselves in the Baltic region, which consists of countries with different models of natural population change, different national urban and migration policies and different external and internal migration trends shaped by dissimilar urbanisation patterns.

The new issue of the *Baltic Region* includes contributions from geographers, historians and economists employing a wide spectrum of approaches to studying how development is regulated in territories affected by the movement of people and investment. The focus of economic inquiries is on the effect two principal factors of production — labour and capital — have on the development of cities and rural areas. Such studies largely benefit from taking into consideration the geographical factor, be it the coastal position, settlement hierarchy or the condition of infrastructure.

The issue opens with an article from the famous regional studies scholar Prof. Olga Kuznetsova. Her contribution is devoted to Russia's national urban policy. Having analysed European, and especially German, practices, she offers recommendations for a national urban policy in Russia. The article proposes a shift from federal support for towns of specific types (single-industry towns and *science towns*) to a comprehensive and clearly-defined urban policy aimed to reduce the concentration of population and economic activity in Moscow.

The second article in the economic section of the issue also explores the role of the largest urban agglomerations. Its author, the corresponding member of the Russian Academy of Sciences Alexey Kuznetsov, puts to the test the city-hierarchy-dependent patterns of spatial FDI expansion established by geographers and economists in the 1970s-1990s. By looking at Asian companies working in Finland, Sweden, Denmark and the Baltics, he demonstrates that the hierarchical wavelike model holds for FDI diffusion, with capital agglomerations playing a dominant role (in the study region, these are Stockholm and Helsinki). Kuznetsov also shows that the current prevalence of mergers and acquisitions as a form of direct investment distorts the geographical patterns of the investor's network of subsidiaries and prompts firms with little knowledge of the Baltic region to sell their subsidiaries in the provinces and move closer to the capitals.

The next section of the issue contains two articles concentrating on coastalisation — a crucial factor in the economic development of the Baltic region. Dr Andrey Mikhaylov and Angelina Plotnikova demonstrate that a uniform approach to coastal zone delimitation cannot be applied even to a single, Baltic, region. They stress that marine economy processes are most evident within 10 km of the sea and 30 km of port infrastructure. For some countries, e.g. Germa-

ny, this zone extends to 150 km. The article by Prof Flera Sokolova and Dr Anna Lyalina examines empirical evidence from Russia to prove that coastal regions have special attractiveness to migrants. Not only St Petersburg and coastal municipalities of the Leningrad and Kaliningrad regions but also coastal territories of the Arkhangelsk region are more attractive to migrants than the inland parts of Russia's North-West.

The largest section of the issue is dedicated to studies of migrants with different cultural backgrounds in the Baltic region. The article by Drs Vladislav Vorotnikov and Andrzej Habarta analyses migration from the countries of post-Soviet space to the northwestern periphery of the EU: Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. The authors demonstrate that, unlike Western Europe, Poland and, to a lesser extent, the Baltics welcome migrants from neighbouring nations with similar cultural and linguistic backgrounds. In the long run, this preference will facilitate migrant integration into the recipient society.

Sweden, which is the focus of the contribution from Dr Aleksey Sarabiev, has adopted a different migration policy. Arab Middle Eastern diasporas, especially the Syrian and Iraqi ones, are playing an increasing role in the country. The author argues that the business acumen, professional skills, education and many business ties of Syrian immigrants will soon make the diaspora, well integrated into Swedish society, the leader amongst Arab newcomers.

A continuation of the Swedish theme is the article by Ekaterina Talalaeva and Prof. Tatayna Pronina. They consider emerging elements of an institutionalised Muslim 'parallel society' in 'unprotected areas' — the marginalised immigrant districts of Swedish cities. The study states that the efforts of Swedish Islamist organisations committed to maintaining the Muslim identity both prevent the cultural assimilation of the immigrants and hamper the full implementation of Sweden's integration policy.

Another two studies explore the social and demographic development of rural areas, which has become ever more acute in recent decades. In their article 'The effect of geographical position and employment fluctuations on rural settlement trends', Prof Gennady Federov and Dr Tatyana Kuznetsova review findings they obtained when running various research projects. Both authors are acknowledged experts in regional economic and socio-demographic research, which Federov first embarked on in the 1970s under the supervision of Prof. Agafonov. In the 1980s, he proposed the concept of the geographical-demographic situation, which was the focus of Kuznetsova's doctoral thesis defended in 2008.

The article examines the economic and demographic problems of rural areas at meso- and micro-district levels. It estimates resources for rural-urban workforce redistribution, which increased dramatically when the organisational and technological change occurred in rural areas in the wave of privatisation. The authors believe that the attempts of the authorities to create non-agricultural jobs in villages will not solve the problem of rural employment in the near future, and the employment-related factor in rural-urban migration will persist. Still, none of this

means that efforts to create rural jobs and solve social problems in rural areas are futile. The authors suggest building on the concept of a unified settlement system, proposed by Boris Khorev in the 1970s, to address social issues in villages.

Amongst Russian regions (at the mesolevel), the authors identify several types of territories with specific geographical-demographic features, calling for a differentiated approach to measures for rural development. Micro-district variations are shown for the Kaliningrad region, which has a developed and urbanised western part (the Kaliningrad agglomeration), whilst the eastern part lagging far behind it. The article proposes measures for rural development, different for the east and west of the region.

The contribution from Drs Ivan and Lidiya Gumenyuk 'Transport connectivity as a factor in overcoming challenges of the periphery: the case of rural areas in the Kaliningrad region' addresses yet another aspect of regional spatial organisation, also having a role in improving the quality of life in rural areas. The three-tier regional typology of central places proposed by the authors echoes the concept of a unified settlement system, which Fedorov and Kuznetsova describe in their article. Of considerable interest are the maps showing transport connectivity between local central places (smaller towns) and Kaliningrad and demonstrating the accessibility of local centres for adjacent territories.

The authors stress that the Kaliningrad region has transport connectivity above the national average. Still, trends towards population polarisation are also present there. The population is being pulled into the Kaliningrad agglomeration; municipal centres are losing stability; the rural settlement system is degenerating; the socio-economic space compression, typical of most Russian regions, is taking place on the territory.

Guest editors of the issue

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