
INTRODUCTION



The second issue of the journal is devoted to a number of key issues pertaining to the development of the Baltic Sea region.

The “*Theory of Regional Studies*” section is dedicated to theoretical approaches to such crucial concepts as clusters, transnational and cross-border regions. *Prof. A. Shastitko* examines possibilities of applying mechanisms of a new institutional economic theory, more precisely, transaction cost theory, to an object, descriptively characterised as a cluster. In this context, clusters are considered as a form of hybrid institutional agreements. Such agreements exist, as a rule, in the form of a network of bilateral and multilateral contracts between companies that, due to their location and specialisation, are more likely to get involved into recurrent economic exchange than companies from different industries and situated at a significant spatial (in the economic sense) distance. The article examines new approaches to a cluster classification based on the following criteria: presence of a core (centre), localisation of connections, mechanisms of formation and development.

Prof. G. Fedorov and *Dr. V. Korneevets* offer a hierarchy of regions - from the global to the local level. This hierarchy takes into account the type of a region (a political region, an economic region, or a socio-cultural region). Special attention is paid to international regions, primarily, trans-border ones, formed in the course of cooperation between administrative, territorial and municipal institutions of neighbouring countries and involving border regions, having similar important characteristics. The authors analyse the peculiarities of international regions taking the transnational Baltic Sea region (which includes trans-border regions of meso- and microlevel) as an example.

The article by *Dr. Yu. Bazhenov* and *K. Nikulchenkov* is dedicated to the competitiveness of border regions as peculiar constituents of the Russian Federation. A border region is understood as an economic, social and cultural entity within a certain territory. It borders on one or more regions of other countries and cooperates with them on the basis of intergovernmental agreements in the pursuit of maximum satisfaction of the needs of its population. The authors believe that the essence of the development of border regions' competitiveness is a gradual transition from the stage of investment to the stage of innovation. The article offers different methods of regional competitiveness assessment and analyses the prerequisites for raising the competitiveness of the Republic of Karelia as a border region of the North-west federal district.

The “*Cross-border Cooperation*” section is dedicated to the theoretical and practical aspects of cross-border cooperation in the Baltic Sea region. *Prof. A.V. Kuznetsov* considers prospects of Russian euroregions, given the changes in the policy of the European Union. The article analyses the evolution of the EU policy of transnational and cross-border cooperation. According to the author, from the participants' points of view, prospects of Russian-EU euroregion development seem rather attractive. But, as a result of delays in making further steps in the EU-Russia relations, a number of ‘smaller’ achievements of euroregions and similar projects may turn out to be pointless.

D. Davidov and *Dr. T. Chekalina* analyse cross-border cooperation as an instrument of regional branding in the Baltic Sea region. The authors show that the gradual abandonment of the goods-centred approach to marketing and branding, and the shift to the network character of interrelations between the interested actors, on the one hand, and the transformation of the interconnections and networks into the central component of the theory of cross-border cooperation, on the other hand, make it possible to apply the upgraded 'brand' concept to research on cross-border cooperation mechanisms.

T. Melchiorre carries out a comparative analysis of the political and economic factors that influence regional cooperation in the Baltic Sea region and the Black Sea area, both belonging to the same geopolitical system. The author makes a review of these regions describing their differences and similarities. These two regions, as the author claims, are of great importance for the European geopolitical system: due to their geographical position, these regions offer European states direct access to strategic energy resources. International relations in the Black Sea area, unlike those in the Baltic Sea region, are characterised by conflicts and tensions that have escalated lately. In this connection, the EU and NATO should make more effort in order to accelerate stabilisation in the Black Sea area.

Prof. A.I. Kuznetsov compares the long-established term of ‘good neighbourly relations’ and the newly-introduced notion of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). The EU strategy mentions the notion of ‘good neighbourly relations’ only in the context of interaction between neighbouring countries,

i.e. third countries, and never between the EU and its partners, or between the EU member states. The EU international relations seem to be developed as a special European type rather than in the framework of good-neighbourly relations concept; they are aimed not only at maintaining good relations but also at europeanization of neighbours. Thus, the ENP absorbs the earlier term that characterises the symmetric relations of international agents in the framework of the Westphalian system and foregrounds the Euro-centred model of asymmetric relations. It creates certain difficulties in the development of EU-Russia relations, especially, concerning Russia's participation in the European Neighbourhood programmes.

The "**Russian exclave on the Baltic**" section contains two articles. Prof. S. Artobolevsky analyses the efforts of the federal authorities aimed at solving the problems of the Kaliningrad region, which became an exclave of the Russian Federation after the demise of the USSR. The author believes that as long as the federal authorities (primarily understood as the executive authority) defer solving problems of the region, do not take into account all factors involved, and substitute garish one-time campaigns for a consistent strategy towards the region, the federal support to the region and benefits given to it are still insufficient to avoid the region's increasing isolation and achieve sustainable development. In the author's opinion, the acceleration of the region's socioeconomic development requires overcoming a certain disconnection from its neighbours, as well as increasing the region's openness, and strengthening cross-border cooperation with Lithuania and Poland. The Kaliningrad region should become an object of a large-scale, long-term and clearly formulated federal policy (preferably in the framework of the countrywide regional policy), which should be legislated and institutionalised, properly financed and designed for a much longer period.

Dr. S. Shielberg analyses the history, current state and future prospects of cross-border cooperation between the Kaliningrad region and the neighbouring regions of Lithuania and Poland. The lack of border region development strategy, the insufficient financing of cross-border cooperation projects, boundary regime, unequal economic, legal and institutional conditions – these factors are listed among the obstacles to the development of cooperation. The author claims that it is necessary to implement cultural and social projects involving NGOs and other actors. These projects could contribute to maintaining contacts and developing cross-border cooperation. Residents astride the border would be given an opportunity to get to know each other, get rid of fears and prejudices, which would consequently result in increasing trust and better prospects of cross-border cooperation in various fields.

The last section of the journal is "**Education in the Baltic Sea region**". Dr. V. Voronov describes peculiarities of economic mentality and the system of values of Latvian graduates from the region of Latgale. A survey conducted at the end of May-beginning of June, 2008 provided the empirical base of the first Latvian research on this topic. The author comes to the conclusion that two systems of values – the traditional labour and individualistic (market-pragmatic) ones – will coexist in the economic mentality of university graduates of the region for a period of time. The interviews with university graduates reveal a low level of their goals and ambitions, which indicates the dominance of the active-adaptive and passive-adaptive types of practical economic mentality (and thinking) over the purely active type.

The article by N. Brunova, Prof. L. Moskovkin and Dr. Ye. Yurkov describes the activity of the International Association of Teachers of Russian Language and Literature in the Baltic Sea States. The association was established in Paris in 1967 and brings together Russianists from more than 70 countries. The authors focus on the efforts of the IATRLL aimed at the preservation of Russian language and the promotion of Russian language teaching in the Baltic Sea region states. It includes holding research conferences and methodology workshops, festivals of Russian language and culture, contests for the best command of Russian language.

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