MEASURING THE SOCIAL WELL-BEING IN THE RURAL AREAS OF THE KALININGRAD REGION

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This article analyses social wellbeing of rural municipalities of the Kaliningrad region. The degree of social wellbeing is assessed on the basis of an analysis of statistical data and expert evaluations. Rural districts were identified on the basis of the following criteria: the share of population residing in rural areas (the threshold value of 50%); the share of non-residential areas (the threshold value of 75%), and the share of agricultural lands (the threshold value of 50%). Further analysis was based on the indices of geodemographic situation, investment potential, and production development. Rural municipalities were ranked according to these indices. The study showed that the best performing area are the suburban districts of Guryevsk and Bagrationovsk and the agricultural districts of Nesterov and Pravdinsk, whereas the worst performing ones are those of Gvardeisk, Krasnoznamensk, Ozersk, and Chernykhovsk. A comparison with the other constituent entities of the North-western federal district proved that the level of social wellbeing of Kaliningrad rural municipalities is rather high and most of them have made the transition from depression to sustainable development.

Key words: rural districts, geodemographic situation, social wellbeing

Throughout the world, rural territories attract close attention of both researchers and practitioners. In Russia, rural population distribution is studied by geographers. One can mention the works of S. A. Kovalev, A. I. Alekseeva et al. [3; 6; 7], which have already become classics of geography. As of today, the deepest analysis of rural territories has been done by T. G. Nefedova [9; 11—13], who studied socioeconomic problems of the territorial reorganisation of agricultural production. Specialists in related areas explore economic [10] and social aspects of life in rural areas [5; 14]. The

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geodemographic situation in rural areas has been analysed in the works of G. M. Fedorov [15; 16]. Social and economic situation in rural areas is studied by international scholars [20] practitioners analyzing negative trends in the development of non-urban territories [21—23].

The current administrative division of the Kaliningrad region was introduced in 2010 as a result of a municipal reform [2]. The region consists of 7 urban and 15 municipal districts. These administrative units differ in their area, natural conditions, and the level of their development. This work sets out to develop criteria for identifying rural district and to analyse the degree of their social well-being based on the statistical data provided by the municipal database [4].

International geographic research papers do not suggest a single criterion for identifying a territorial unit as a rural or urban one. In the USA, the "rural threshold" is the population density of 999 people per 1 km^2 [18]. In Sweden, it is not common practice to distinguish between rural and urban areas, however, there is a notion of "scarcely populated" territories, from which a journey to the nearest settlement with a population of more than 3,000 people takes more than 45 minutes by car or bus [19]. The term "rural settlement", which denotes a municipal unit of the lowest administrative level consisting of several rural communities and territories between them, has entered common usage after the municipal reform in Russia [1]. Rural settlements constitute municipal districts. In Russia, a settlement is considered to be a town if its population is more than 12,000 people and more than 85 % of its residents work in other sectors than agriculture. Other settlements are to be considered rural ones. However, more than 11 % of Russian population live in smaller towns, urban-type settlements and rural district centres with a population of less than 12,000 people. Besides, more than half of the population of smaller towns do not have any urban infrastructure, first of all, sewerage. Thus such municipal units can hardly be classed under "urban" units [11].

Such an array of opinions as to how to identify a rural/urban district is not a coincidence. It reflects specific conditions existing in each country. In the USA, the density of population differs from state to state (and from district to district within them). There are densely populated areas of the East Coast and scarcely populated mountainous and desert areas. It explains such a high density threshold. Sweden is characterised by meridional unevenness of population distribution. The densely populated south of the country, first of all, the province of Scania and Metropolitan Stockholm differ radically from the almost uninhabited north. It is only natural that there is also the criterion of transport accessibility among other criteria. As to Russia, it seems impossible to choose a single criterion because of obvious differences in both environmental conditions and population distribution. Large areas of the country have population density of less than 1 person per 1 km^2.

Unlike most regions of the Russian Federation, the Kaliningrad region is densely populated. As of January 1, 2013 its population density was 63.13 people per square kilometre. Most district centres fall under the category of smaller settlements and do not meet the "town" requirement. At the same time the share of labour force engaged in agriculture decreased follow-

ing the global trend: if we use 5 % as a threshold value, 13 districts of the Kaliningrad region could be classed as rural ones in 2007 and only 6 in 2009. Technically, all municipal districts can be considered rural, since, according to the federal law [1], only they can include rural settlements. There are 15 municipal units of this type in the Kaliningrad region. However, according to this technical criterion, not all municipal districts fall into the "rural" category. The Baltiysk municipal district consists of two urban and one rural settlements, whereas the Svetlogorsk district does not have rural areas.

Therefore, one cannot identify rural areas according to a single criterion. It is necessary to analyse a whole set of criteria. For municipal districts of the Kaliningrad region, we chose the following criteria: the percentage of population residing in the region's rural area (the threshold value of 50 %), the percentage of areas unsuitable for living (the threshold value of 75 %); the percentage of agricultural lands (the threshold value of 50 %). According to this criteria, 13 districts were identified as rural ones: the Guryevsk, Ozersk, Slavsk, Neman, Krasnoznamensk, Nesterov, Bagrationovsk, Pravdinsk, Ozersk, Zelenogradsk, Chernyakhovsk, Gusev, and Gvardeysk municipal districts.

Indicators of rural areas' social wellbeing

The concept of social wellbeing is widely used in psychology and personal sociology, however, it can also be employed in a detailed description of a territorial community, since it is characterised by objective and available statistical indicators. Social wellbeing, i.e. standards of living can be classed as a sociodemographic category of the geodemographic situation [8].

A key indicator of the social wellbeing of rural districts is the rate of natural increase and net migration (table 1).

Table 1

Demographic profile of the rural municipal units of the Kaliningrad region, 2012

Municipal district	Natural increase rate, ‰	Net migration,% of the total population
Bagrationovsk	3.5	1.4
Gvardeysk	0.6	−0.7
Guryevsk	2.5	1.8
Gusev	−2.5	0.4
Zelenogradsk	0.7	0.6
Krasnoznamensk	0.6	−1.8
Neman	−2.1	0
Nesterov	2.4	−1.3
Ozersk	−1.1	−1.4
Polessk	0.7	0.4
Pravdinsk	−1.2	0.1
Slavsk	0.8	−0.9
Chernyakhovsk	−2.5	−0.9

As table 1 shows, in 2012 the birth rate finally exceeded the mortality rate in eight districts. In 2009, the mortality rate exceeded the birth rate in all rural areas, except the Guryevsk district. Today, the worst situation is observed in the Chernyakhovsk and Neman districts, the most favourable — in Bagrationovsk and Guryevsk. These districts are also leaders in terms of migration inflow. However, it is possible that these results are explained not so much by a steady trend, but rather by a temporary effect of increasing birth rate through the "maternal capital"[1]. Rural areas have a similar age and sex structure. Male residents prevail in the age groups of children and working population. In the senior age group, the percentage of female population is two-three times as big as that of male population.

Reliable wellbeing indicators are marriage and divorce rates. Unfortunately, at the moment, statistics offices do not offer more recent information than that of 2009. That year, the maximum positive gap between the marriage and divorce rates was observed in the Guryevsk and Gusev districts, however, the situation could have changed.

Therefore, in terms of demography, the most affluent districts are Kaliningrad's suburb of Guryevsk and the adjacent border Bagrationovsk district. It is worth noting, that the overall demographic situation in Kaliningrad rural districts is favourable, whereas most rural areas of the North-western federal district see a population reduction as a result of natural decrease and negative net migration.

Scholars usually use such indicators as trade and catering industry turnover. However, they are almost identical in all Kaliningrad rural areas. Moreover, due to good transport accessibility and the region's compactness, expensive purchases are usually made in several large centres (Kaliningrad, Sovetsk, and Chernyakhovsk), that is why these data are not highly accurate.

Standards of living in rural areas are often characterised by such an indirect indicator as alcohol sales to population (we recalculated the per capita values for working age and senior population). Apparently, the 'phenomenon' of moonshine production undermines the accuracy of this indicator. However, it can still reflect the social wellbeing situation (table 2).

As table 2 shows, the degree of 'alcoholisation' differs from district to district. It is higher in the districts that include larger towns (Guryevsk, Neman). Low alcohol consumption in the Slavsk, Krasnoznamensk, and Ozersk districts is indicative of poverty (local residents do not have money even for beer) and, probably, high popularity of moonshining. However, in comparison to the rural areas of other regions of the Russian Federation, the situation in the Kaliningrad re-

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[1] Translator's note: A family is entitled to maternal capital following the birth (or adoption) of a second child (or third or subsequent child, if the family has not previously used its right to receive these funds) on or after January 1, 2007.

gion can be considered as favourable. In the Kirov region, alcohol consumption ranges between 7 and 20.4 litres per capita (over 14 years), in the Pskov region from 7.4 to 16.4 litres. In most districts of the Kaliningrad region, alcohol consumption is lower than in other Russian regions.

Table 2

**Per capita alcohol sales to population over 15 years of age
in municipal districts of the Kaliningrad region**

Municipal district	Alcohol beverages		Beer
	Total	Vodka	
Bagrationovsk	3.9	2.1	10.1
Gvardeysk	3	2.1	14.4
Guryevsk	17.8	11.2	14.4
Gusev	6.8	4.2	13.8
Zelenogradsk	3.9	3	8
Krasnoznamensk	1.2	0.8	3.9
Neman	7.1	4.4	17.3
Nesterov	6.4	4.5	28.3
Ozersk	4	2.2	6.5
Polessk	5.1	3	10.7
Pravdinsk	2.4	1.3	5.2
Slavsk	3.7	3	2
Chernyakhovsk	5.5	3.8	17.6

Current economic situation in the rural districts
of the Kaliningrad region

An assessment of the wellbeing of rural districts should not be reduced to the above indicators. The level of the municipal economy and the level of territorial development affect all demographic indicators and determine the district's attractiveness and the level of comfort.

The Kaliningrad region is an exclave of Russia; its sustainable development depends on the diversification of its economy [17]. It is also a necessary condition for the development of municipal units.

Important indicators of rural economic development include per capita investment in fixed capital, per capita output of manufacturing and agricultural industries combined with the contribution of individual farms (table 3). The latter indicator is used to identify major agricultural producers. In most districts, individual farms account for most agricultural produce. Modern commercial agricultural production is developing only in the Nesterov and Pravdinsk districts.

Table 3

**Rural economic development indicators of the Kaliningrad region
(th.rubles per capita)**

Municipal district	Investment into fixed capital	Agricultural industry output	Contribution of individual farms, %	Manufacturing industry output
Bagrationovsk	7.7	No data available	No data available	49.7
Gvardeysk	12	25.4	75.6	164
Guryevsk	72.1	45.5	57.1	55.6
Gusev	12.7	35.7	40.9	42.7
Zelenogradsk	18.9	32.3	53.9	63.3
Krasnoznamensk	4	62.8	67.9	14
Neman	380.5 (construction of the Baltic NPP)	41.7	57.8	74.2
Nesterov	23.1	91.9	30.9	1.9
Ozersk	28.2	35.5	78.6	0.1
Polessk	2.5	48.4	62.3	136.7
Pravdinsk	31	90.7	34	47.1
Slavsk	4.8	65.7	67	9.9
Chernyakhovsk	12.5	19	60.6	148.1

Rural district ranking

Having analysed the values of the natural increase coupled with net migration, investment in fixed capital, and per capita output, we did the ranking of the rural districts of the Kaliningrad region. The ranking was based on several indicators; the more affluent districts are ranked first (table 4).

Table 4

An assessment of wellbeing of Kaliningrad rural districts

Municipal district	Rank	Characteristics (geographical position, economic situation)
Bagrationovsk	2	The district is situated in the vicinity of the regional capital, has three border checkpoints
Gvardeysk	10	The district is situated in the central part of the region, a transition from economic depression to development is being observed. It is home to a major ornamental plant farm, a large greenhouse farm is being built in the district
Guryevsk	1	A suburban district with rapidly developing manufacturing and agricultural industries
Gusev	8	A compact district, remote from the regional capital. Its potential lies in developed industrial production
Zelenogradsk	5	A suburban resort district that boasts a national park. There is a border checkpoint on its territor
Krasnoznamensk	10	One of the most remote districts, most of its territory is covered by woods. There is only one large industrial facility — a brick factory

Municipal district	Rank	Characteristics (geographical position, economic situation)
Neman	4	An affluent agricultural district with a developed dairy industry. The Baltic NPP is being constructed there (see investment in fixed capital, table 3)
Nesterov	3	The most remote district characterised by developed livestock breeding. The industry survived the crisis period. The district has the smallest areas of fallow lands. The district has two border checkpoints
Ozersk	9	A remote district with infertile soils and uneven terrain. The current leader in the livestock population (beef breeds)
Polessk	7	The district is situated in the centre of the region. A large territory is covered with marshes and woods. It boasts developed dairy farming, food industry, and agricultural tourism
Pravdinsk	2	The district boasts rapidly developing pig farming and agricultural processing industry
Slavsk	6	A remote district of traditional livestock breeding. One fourth of its territory has unique landscapes. Most of agricultural lands are polders
Chernyakhovsk	11	One of the most economically depressed districts, which is explained by a difficult situation in the district centre

The ranking of rural municipal districts made it possible to produce a chart of their social wellbeing (fig.).

Conclusions

• In the Kaliningrad case, the criteria for identifying rural districts at the regional level were the percentage of population residing in rural areas and the percentage of agricultural lands. On this basis, 13 out of 22 municipal districts were classed as 'rural' ones.

• All rural districts of the Kaliningrad region were affected by the crisis of the 1990s. However today the degree of their wellbeing varies. The analysis of the geodemographic situation, investment potential, and development of agricultural and manufacturing industries shows that the most affluent areas are the suburban Guryevsk and Bagrationovsk and the agricultural Pravdinsk districts.

• The most economically depressed areas are the Krasnoznamensk, Chernyakhovsk, and Gvardeysk districts, which can be explained by the challenges faced by their municipal centres. A slow transition from depresson to development can be observed. However it is not statistically significant.

• All in all, the degree of social wellbeing of Kaliningrad rural areas is rather high in comparison to other regions of the Russian North-western federal district; most of rural municipal units have undergone a transition from depression to sustainable development.
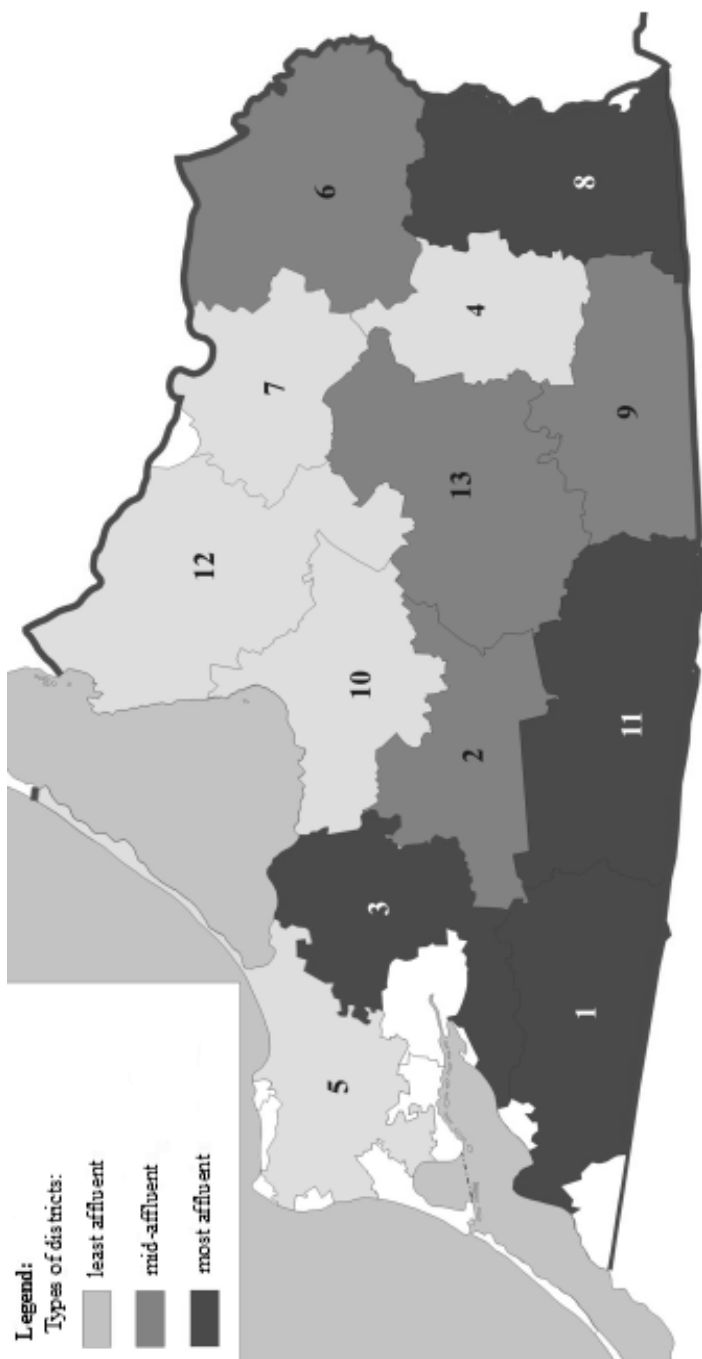
Fig. Social wellbeing of rural municipal districts of the Kaliningrad region:

1 — Bagrationovsk; *2* — Gvardeysk; *3* — Guryevsk; *4* — Gusev; *5* — Zelenogradsk; *6* — Krasnoznamensk; *7* — Neman; *8* — Nesterov; *9* — Ozersk; *10* — Polessk; *11* — Pravdinsk; *12* — Slavsk; *13* — Chernyakhovsk

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