TITLE: MAKING A MIDDLE LANDSCAPE: THE NEW GEOGRAPHY OF RUSSIAN SUBURBS

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This report is an abridged version of a Report of about 150 single-spaced pages including Tables, Figures, and a large volume of spreadsheet data on Moscow and Yaroslavl oblasts. The full Report, by the same authors and under the same title, has been made available by the Council to the Department of State in electronic form for inclusion in the OSIS system. Because the full Report exceeds the Council's facilities, both electronic and physical, it is not available from the Council in print.

The full Report consists of:

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This abridged version consists of the full Introduction with its Executive Summary, the
Executive Summaries only of the two case studies, the full Conclusion, and only such Tables,
Figures and Endnotes as these contain.
Executive Summary

Russian suburbs are different from their counterparts in the West, especially in the US, in five respects: 1) Russian suburbs account for a smaller proportion of the population; 2) they are repeatedly shifted in space due to repeated changes in city boundaries; 3) they are pervaded by crisper divisions of residential space (urban, rural, and agro-recreational); 4) they host myriads of second dwellings and agricultural subsidiary plots belonging to urbanites; and finally 5) they are not perceived as predominantly residential areas because of the heightened significance of farmland in cities' environs.

The recreational significance of Russian suburbia is compensatory in nature because it is rooted in the deficiencies of urban residential settings and in the long-lasting tradition of growing at least some of your own food. On the other hand, the significance of commercial farming in suburbia derives in large measure from rural polarization. The depopulation of most areas outside two hours accessibility to big cities has been drastic, and rampant mismanagement and alcoholism hold sway amidst the remaining locals. Consequently, the vicinities of those cities appear almost the only pockets of viable commercial farming.

Russia's quasi-market mechanism of land re-distribution has gone through two stages in the 1990s: an administrative re-partition of land (1991-93) and a controlled land market (beginning in 1994). Land tax and normative land prices were introduced, and a substantial degree of regional and local self-rule is tolerated, with respective authorities acting as landlords.

The absence of clear-cut stipulations of land sales and the availability of a shadow land market alongside the official one leaves a lot of room for all sorts of abuses and profiteering by local officials involved in land allocation. It should also be taken into account that official and unofficial selling of land in exurbia is often practiced for the replenishment of deficient budgets of various enterprises and institutions. It would be impossible for one to describe all the shadow and semi-criminal mechanisms that are at work and we do not aspire to do this. Still, we will show later in this report, some of the results that the land re-distribution mechanisms, both overt and covert, lead to.
Russia is an archipelago and suburbs are its tidewaters.
- A. Treivish

INTRODUCTION

We had not yet embarked on our research, but a kind of a terminological drama was already unfolding. In fact, the conflict is barely hidden in the title of this project, for which we took pains to avoid the use of the word suburb. That this word has, nevertheless, surfaced as early as the epigraph, which is a translation from Russian, only underscores our quandary.

The attempt to avoid the term suburb, derived, quite simply, from our personal acquaintance with rural-urban fringes both in Russia and in the US, arguably the most suburban nation of the world. Even before we made detailed plans for this project, it was abundantly clear to us that the American suburb and the Russian prigorod invoke different mental associations, despite being locational and direct lexical counterparts of each other, according to any Russian-English or English-Russian dictionary. While suburb implies the outgrowth or extension of an urban realm, its intrusion into the countryside and the ensuing re-implantation of typically urban amenities in a more rarified residential setting, prigorod suggests the countryside itself, but a countryside impacted by its close proximity to a city, with 'impacted' often meaning gentrified. Also whereas suburbia typically develops from a central city outward, large groups of people "ejecting" themselves from the corporate limits of a city, a Russian prigorod largely develops inward: on the one hand, a rural settlement network contracts, on the other, the rural people move closer to a city to take advantage of its broader range and higher level of opportunities and quality of services. A restrictive policy governing residence permits (the infamous propiska) in large cities and the lasting absence of a real-estate market have created a peculiar barrier effect at the city line. Prigorod has thus become a stepping stone to a city, not out of it as in the West. Paradoxically, the fact that Russian cities used to expand outward, as do all cities of the world, does not seem to change the nature of the situation: typically Russians simply extend a city line, and Western-style suburbia does not take shape. Only most recently, around the largest cities of Russia has the situation begun to change somewhat.

Reflecting on the above distinctions - which by no means exhaust the subject - prompted us to cast aside the term suburb and embrace the less frequently used exurbia and exurbs to denote the rural-urban fringe in Russia. While we indeed adhered to this terminological choice in our recently published book², our concern increased when we came across a provocative 1987 article by Robert Fishman, which had heretofore escaped our attention³. This article showed that we are not the first to be disturbed by the terminological confusion over the term suburb as it applies to dissimilar realities of different countries. Fishman also made a compelling case that in fact Americans usurped the term to identify entities that are substantially different from what the term originally applied to. The term was conceived in England and up until the late 1940s its original sense applied in America as well. In the words of Kenneth T. Jackson, "whereas [suburban] once implied a relationship with
the city, the term today is more likely to represent a **distinction from** the city.⁴ While praising Jackson for his indeed remarkable account of the evolution of American suburbs⁵, Fishman criticizes him for not fully appreciating the implications of this latter statement on the postwar American life and even proposed the term *metroland* as supposedly more fitting to the new American context.

But while the argument struck a familiar cord with us - in Russia *prigorodnyi* (suburban) also emphasizes a relationship with a city more than a distinction from it - it has also become clear that terms have their own life, never mind commonsensical and/or admittedly scientific attempts to influence their meaning. With this in mind we are still in a quandary as to which term to use, a less-than-respectable confession for a scholarly report. But whatever term might be most accurate, this introduction will outline our preliminary understanding of the differences between cities’ environs in Russia and in the West, particularly in the US, and the new phenomena that those fringes have been facing in the 1990s in conjunction with market reforms.

**Urban Margins: Russia Vs. the West**

The following six inter-related aspects help highlight the differences between rural-urban fringes in Russia and in the West.

1. **Population concentration.** According to the US Census Bureau, in the US, 46.3% of the population qualified as suburbanites in 1990; 31.2% lived in central cities, and 22.5% outside metro areas. "In a major piece of comparative research, Hall and Hay (1980) showed that as early as 1950 some 86% of West Europe’s 270.5 million inhabitants were living in metropolitan areas, while twenty years later the proportion of a substantially greater total (316.2 million) had risen to 88%"⁶. Knowing that the share of urbanites in Western Europe was no higher than 70% in the 1970s, we can estimate the proportion of suburbanites by that time. We also know that metropolitan areas of Western Europe are much more compact than their American counterparts, and that single-family detached homes exist side by side with multi-story apartment buildings in West European suburbia.

In Russia, 53% of the entire population live in cities and towns with over 50,000 residents (the US threshold for designating metropolitan areas: they must host a town of this size or bigger); and 23% are rural⁷. It is, however, difficult to distinguish suburbanites because the remaining 24% cover both residents of free-standing small towns and suburbanites. Yet it is clear that Chauncy Harris’ 1970 formulation that the USSR is a country of large cities applies even more to today’s Russia. It is indeed a country of large cities and neither rural-urban fringe, nor the countryside dominate Russia’s population in any sense of the word.

2. **Frequency of border changes.** It would be, however, timely to point out that at least in part typically suburban developments in Russia have been precluded by fairly frequent expansion of cities’ outer limits. Moscow’s area was barely 56 square km in 1860; by the time of the 1917 Revolution it was 178 sq. km; in 1935, when the first Soviet Master Plan of Moscow’s development
was adopted, it occupied 350 sq. km; in 1959, 500 sq. km. In 1961, during its largest single expansion Moscow swallowed an additional 390 sq. km of its oblast’s land, so when the Moscow Ring Motorway became the city’s official boundary, its size was 890 sq. km. Finally in 1984, Moscow expanded to 994 sq. km. And although the extent and pace of Moscow’s spatial growth has no match in Russia, other large Russian cities extended their borders many times as well during the Soviet period. Although we have not done any systematic research on this, it seems to us that in the West city limits have been much more stable, at least in the post-war era. In Russia, all areas newly incorporated in cities have become sites for multi-story apartment projects. In fact, in many cases they have become more densely packed with high-rise residential developments than areas located between the downtowns and city lines.

3. Crisp divisions between residential sectors. In Russia, residential developments both immediately outside a city line and in its vicinities break down into three easily distinguishable categories. They either fall within the corporate limits of satellite towns (and in that case are no different from residential areas of central cities since in both cases multi-story complexes dominate the landscape), or qualify as rural, or, finally, as recreational settlements where urbanites’ second dwellings are located. The two last categories actually overlap, but in both cases an American-style single-family detached house with its attendant amenities is even more of a dream than in America: relatively few developments actually approach that ideal. While many more have succeeded in the 1990’s than before, it is satellite towns that host the bulk of the permanent suburban/exurban populations in Russia. But since such satellites account for a lower share of exurban space than, say, American suburbia does, comparable population densities may be misleading since they apply to different portions of cities’ environs. For example, the population density in New York’s suburbs in the 1980s was 733 persons per sq. km and around Chicago, 453 persons per sq. km; at the same time, the average population density within a comparable radius around Moscow was 575 persons per sq. km; however, this latter figure in fact conceals a striking variation in residential density. Between satellite towns where the actual density may be as high as 5,000 per sq km and the countryside with barely 50 residents per sq km. In the words of Jackson, “the outer boundaries of Copenhagen, Moscow, Cologne, and Vienna abruptly terminate with apartment buildings, and a twenty-minute train ride will take one well into the countryside.” Such an arrangement of suburbia is a far cry from what one typically encounters in the United States with its vast suburban residential belts, once dubbed a “non-place urban realm” full of identical single-family residential neighborhoods.

4. Suburbia/exurbia as a major locus of recreational second dwellings. This phenomenon mentioned above deserves to be emphasized as one of the major peculiarities of Russia’s urban margins. In the West, usually only the wealthiest part of the population can afford to maintain more than one home, especially a detached family house combining urban amenities with rural or semi-
rural setting. In Russia the *dacha* is confined primarily to the wealthiest part of the population. *Dacha* implies a large (up to 0.50 ha) parcel of land and a more or less sophisticated house, which, depending on amenities, can be used either only in summer or all year round. However, most other urbanites who own second dwellings in the countryside, predominantly in exurbia, use smaller parcels in so-called collective orchards comradeships, or still smaller ones as vegetable gardens. Altogether no less than 60% of Russian urbanites use some kind of a summer dwelling outside a city, with a parcel of land performing both farming and recreational functions. The enormous spread of the phenomenon makes Russian exurbia different from the West. We will elaborate on this in the main body of our report.

5. **Urban margins against the backdrop of the spatial pattern of population and its dynamics.** A stage "of population redistribution in which the larger settlements decline (or stagnate) in their populations due to net migration losses, while the smaller ones, such as villages and small or medium-sized 'free-standing' towns, increase their populations through net migration gains"\(^{13}\) has never actually arrived in Russia. Although the 1992-1995 period during which the rural population experienced a sudden growth stands as an exception, it was a short-lived phenomenon exclusively driven by the acute crisis in cities in the wake of the removal of state price controls and stalling industry. However, already by 1995, the situation had returned to what had been normal for Russia for over a century: a positive relationship between a settlement's growth rate and size, although the overall negative rate of the Russian population's natural increase has suppressed growth everywhere it takes place at all. However, and this is exceedingly important to point out, trends in Russia's recent and even longer-term population redistribution become part of a meaningful picture only when viewed against the backdrop of the overall spatial pattern of population. "Being a country of big cities, Russia suffers from their deficit," write Georgy Lappo and Pawel Polyan, the leading Russian experts on the issue, pointing out that zones of immediate influence of big cities account for a small percentage share of Russia's land\(^{14}\). Russia is a sparsely settled country, and the notion of sparse settlement by no means applies only to Siberia, whose territory is "literally torn apart by distance."\(^{15}\) Siberia is Russia's classic periphery, that is, an area that not only is perceived but actually is remote from the heartland. But many Westerners do not quite realize that a sense of remoteness is far more acute in areas barely 150-250 km from Moscow and Saint Petersburg, for example, where the perception of living in the middle of nowhere belies the actual proximity to those population centers. Of course, the primitive conditions of roads and other means of communication create this perception in the first place. But so does a sparse network of vibrant urban cores, and long-lasting centripetal trends in migration only add to this polarized pattern. In European Russia the average distance between cities with population over 250,000 is twice as large as in Western Europe (314 km vs. 158 km, according to our calculations). While American cities are ill-suited for such comparison (one probably needs to take the entire SMAs into account, given that the level of
infrastructure available there is comparable with what is available in Russian cities or within their
corporate limits), in America and in Canada the densely settled heartlands and sparsely settled
hinterlands are spatially disunited. In Russia, however, they interpenetrate. For example, today the
population densities in Pskov, Novgorod, and Tver Oblasts (13-19 people per sq km with rural
population density being 4-5 persons per sq km) are on a par with many areas in Siberia and in
European Russia’s North. Note that these oblasts lie between Moscow and Saint Petersburg, two
principal population centers, 651 km apart, comparable to the distance between the northern and the
southern tips of the North-American megalopolis. It appears that in Russia the area of old
colonization has shed its spatial continuity and dissociated into original nuclei, big and small.
Looking like oases in a rural vastness these nuclei have been able to cast the web of intense social
interactions upon only a relatively small part of the inter-urban space. This stands in contrast to
North America, and especially to West Europe.

The above casts light upon the special role of areas located next door to a large city’s
boundaries. In view of the advanced process of rural polarization (Fig. 1.1), one side of which is the
drastic depopulation of most areas outside two hours accessibility to big cities (in Central Russia and
in the Northwest, and to some extent in the Central Chernozem Region as well), the vicinities of
those cities appear almost the only pockets of viable commercial farming. And they are also the only
areas where one can find the best features of both urban and rural ways of life.

Therefore, the role of agriculture in Russia’s urban margins is incomparably higher than
almost everywhere in the West with the exception of Canada and Australia, with their uniquely
high degree of spatial coincidence of population and fertile land16. In Russia, however, such a
coincidence is largely non-existent; instead, what accounts for the heightened significance of so-
called exurban (prigorodnoye) agriculture, is the fact that exurbia has become the only area where
human capital is available, as far as both quantity and quality are concerned, and where rampant
mismanagement and alcoholism have not done away with commercial farming. In fact, only the
piedmont provinces of the Northern Caucasus are the exception to this otherwise ubiquitous rule in
European Russia.

Soviet planners have long attached their de facto investment priorities to exurbia despite their
govert preoccupation with equality. Researching agriculture around the city of Moscow for the Soviet
Academy of Sciences’ project Moskovskiy Stolichnyi Region, one of the authors discovered that in
Moscow Oblast the monetary values of fixed assets per 100 hectares of farmland are in inverse
proportion with the distance from Moscow (\( R = -0.832 \)) and that on average values decline by
55,000 rubles per every successive 10 km distance, with gross agricultural output per 100 ha
decreasing by 35,200 rubles per 10 km. Note that at that time (1986) a rouble had a different, far
greater, value than it does today, so the gradients quoted were very steep. Suffice it to note that the
output gradient, that is, the pace of productivity decline per 10 km from the oblast center outward,
exceeded the average agricultural output per unit of land recorded in some non-Chernozem regions. Both farm labor productivity and return-on-capital tended to decrease with the distance from Moscow, which led us to model the situation as a static growth cone (Fig. 1.2). The outward productivity sloping shown in Figure 1.2 had nothing to do with natural fertility of soil. On the contrary, in Moscow Oblast fertility is at its highest in Zaochye, that is, south of the Oka River, where grain yields were, nevertheless, 10 c/ha lower than in the immediate environs of Moscow. Similar farm productivity variation resembling von Thunen’s economic landscape was later found in other oblasts, the only differences being the size of the core-periphery gradient normally dependent upon the size of an urban center, a more complicated picture in a few bi-central oblasts, etc. The flip side of such gradients has been rural polarization and the contraction of the rural activity space, whereby the exurban areas account for an ever-increasing share of the total produce. Today it is typical for a Russian exurbia to have 20 times more livestock per unit of land than is available in outlying areas in the same oblast, even though a periphery has much better conditions for producing animal feed, large pastures and hay meadows, which have almost disappeared from exurbia because of other agricultural and non-agricultural land uses. Needless to say, whenever in Western literature on the subject we come across the mostly negative assessments of impacts that urban-based forces exert upon agriculture in what C.R. Bryant calls the city’s countryside, we interpret these impacts as phenomena of an entirely different world - technologically, economically, and socially - than the one we have been focused on for quite some time. Not only have the urbanization impacts on output and performance of farms been overwhelmingly positive in Russia, even as cities regularly swallow a lot of agricultural land, but also the spatial stratification of the whole agricultural activity has hinged upon different factors.

One example concerns Thunian concentric rings around market centers. "Naturally, once the assumptions regarding homogeneity of the land and the closed regional system of exchange in agricultural produce are relaxed," write Bryant and Johnston, "the concentric ring structure breaks down." Although the latter assumption appears valid in Russia due to inferior means of transportation, the former one, regarding the natural quality of land, can be justifiably relaxed: in virtually every Russian oblast that we know of, the pockets of the most fertile land find themselves apart from the oblast centers. And yet the concentric rings structure dominates the rural economic landscape, which is evidenced in productivity gradients (Fig. 1.2) and in specialization, with exurban farms usually emphasizing milk, vegetables, green and succulent feed, and potatoes, and outlying ones focusing more on grain. Such Thunian rings are sustained not only and in many cases not as much by transportation costs as by the polarization of the countryside conditioned by socio-demographic factors.

In summary, Russian suburbs appear to be: 1) less visible as population concentrations than their Western, especially American counterparts; 2) more frequently shifted in space due to repeated
changes in city boundaries; 3) pervaded by crisper internal divisions of residential space; 4) host myriads of agro-recreational second dwellings of urbanites and, finally, 5) not at all perceived as predominantly residential areas in view of the heightened significance of farmland in the "city's countryside." To that we would add that no internally cohesive body of literature on Russian suburbs exists that would be comparable in scope to information available on North American suburbia. Whatever knowledge does exist is compartmentalized and reflects major functional divisions of urban margins: satellite towns have been studied within the context of urban agglomerations; recreational dwellings have been one of the subjects of recreational geography, commuting and so-called suburban agriculture have each been studied through disjointed efforts of different research teams. It appears, however, that the on-going reform has created a need for the convergence of all those efforts because the introduction of market relations has shattered the long-term balance between the respective study areas. And although the role of purely administrative decision-making still reigns supreme, market forces are making themselves felt, which is especially evident in land use along the rural-urban fringe. In the urban margins market land-use relations are more mature than anywhere else in Russia.

The following section addresses the principal land users in a Russian-style suburbia and how they and their relationship have been affected by the reforms of the 1990s.

**Urban margins and new land use trends**

Russian land use statistics routinely distinguish the following land-use categories: 1) farms, including 1a) socialized farms (kolkhozes, sovkhozes, and their recent converts like joint-stock companies and comradeships, which for all practical purposes are no different from their former Soviet-style incarnations); 1b) private family farms, and 1c) subsidiary or personal auxiliary farms; 2) urban civil administrations (former Soviets), 3) rural civil administrations; 4) industrial and defense enterprises and transport; 5) cooperatives of recreational second dwellings' owners, collective orchards and gardens, and so-called individual construction sites; 6) forestry; 7) nature reserves, national parks, and public recreation sites; and 8) Federal and oblast/republic governments that own so-called reserved land, a diverse category which may include land out of use and objects of utmost secrecy. Of the above list, only private farms and individual construction are new categories added to the list in the 1990s, but their share in total land is minuscule. For example, private family farms occupy only 5% of all farmland of Russia, while in the vicinities of large cities their share is no higher than 3% of the farmland and 1-2% of the total land area. As for individual construction, its share does not exceed 1% of suburban/exurban land.

By and large, all the land users mentioned have been in conflict with each other on many occasions, the most widely publicized conflicts being between agriculture at large and recreation, and between pig-breeding and poultry farms (whose most frequent location in Russia, unlike in the US,
is in the margins of large cities) and all other land users. That Russian urbanites cramped into
apartments experience an ineradicable pull towards quasi-wild nature they find in exurbia and that at
the same time most technologically advanced types of farming experience pull toward exurbia as well
because of a demographic "desertification" of the outlying rural areas, only exacerbate the
antagonistic nature of suburban land use. While in both the recent and more distant past, land-use
clicts used to be administratively resolved in favor of the production sphere, either industry or
socialized farming, today the situation is different. Crisis-ridden production units are selling or
leasing out their land to newly emerging and more aggressive users.

According to article 72 of the 1993 Constitution of the Russian Federation, land use regulation
falls under the joint jurisdiction of the Russian Federation and its subjects, that is, oblasts, krays,
and republics, while demarcation of property rights can be conducted through special agreements.
This article has thus introduced a decentralization of land use policy. The Russian Federation's "On
Land Reform" law and several presidential decrees of 1993 extended this decentralization even
further, allowing the transfer of land to the jurisdiction of local civil administrations and
acknowledging the land use rights of citizens, enterprises, and institutions. These ground-breaking
decisions shattered the state monopoly on land and amounted to a de facto endorsement of land
ownership rights. However, as the Duma (Russian parliament) has not adopted a Land Use code of
laws elevating these decisions to the appropriate legal status, there is no consistent clarity and/or
uniform treatment of land-use regulations throughout Russia. On top of this, there are some flagrant
contradictions within decrees adopted and between them and the Constitution. For example, the
presidential decree of December 1993, "About Federal Natural Resources," designates Federal and
oblasy jurisdiction over land, whereas the Constitution also recognizes a municipal level of land-use
regulation. Such a legal muddle begets arbitrary rules.

In fact, every oblast, kray, and republic of the Russian Federation has set out to issue its own
land use rulings. Such rulings attach more or less rigorous constraints to land transfers and sales.
However, even where such restrictions are tight, illegal sales and transfers take place, provided there
is a heightened demand for land. Such demand does exist in urban margins and, for example, the
economic survival of exurban farms through unofficial sale or lease of part of their land has become
fairly widespread. As a result, arable land contracts, while collective orchards and private cottages
mushroom, taking over this land. Thus it is the vicinities of large cities that have become the de
facto proving ground and conduit of new land-use relations in Russia.

It would be noteworthy in this regard to highlight a brief history of Russia’s quasi-market
mechanism of land re-distribution as it was taking shape in the 1990s. The overall scheme of such
re-distribution is shown by Figure 1.4. It reveals that the major losers of land in the 1990s appear to
be socialized farms and forestry. One can distinguish two periods in that re-allocation. The first
period can be referred to as administrative re-partition of land. According to the presidential
decree of October 1993, "On the Governance of Land-Use Relations and the Development of Agrarian Reform in Russia," the land of socialized farms was "divided" into shares. This did not entail any delimitation of individual shares, only informing members of their rights following from the introduction of share-holding. Specifically, the decree stipulates that "each member of a farm has to be given a certificate of ownership rights over a parcel of land of a certain size without the enclosure of the parcel." The size of a share was determined based on the size of the farm's landholding, quality of land, and the number of farm members. The size varies between and within oblasts, and from one rayon to another. In non-Chernozem oblasts and republics of Russia, one land share ranges from 5-10 ha. Both current farm members and the retirees that used to work for the farm and continue to live in its vicinity were accorded a right to enclose their parcel only in case of withdrawal from a collective farm, a right reminiscent of the Stolypin reform of 1908-1914 when withdrawal from peasant communes became both condoned and encouraged and reminiscent of similar provisions of the 1922 Land Use Code. In the 1990s, however, withdrawal from a collective farm, while condoned, has not been particularly encouraged, nor has it been a realistic option for the majority of peasants, so it has been a rare occurrence with the exception of entire collective farms being disbanded and auctioned, as in the much-publicized experiment in the province of Nizhni Novgorod conducted under the supervision of Western experts.

Not all the land of socialized farms, however, used to be divided into shares, and the amount residual that remained after the apportionment was in part leased to a farm and in part withheld to replenish a so-called re-distribution fund. However, the most widespread phenomenon has been the 1991-93 land transfer from under the jurisdiction of socialized farms to that of local civil administrations. These were lands of rural settlements, subsidiary parcels, and also part of socialized farm pastures and hay meadows that were actually used by farm members to feed their own cattle. In fact, such a land transfer was a kind of legitimization of the actual land-use situations, so a statistically recorded reduction of socialized farmland at that stage did not mean an infringement on their cultivated fields. It is another matter that rural civil administrations (former Soviets) had entirely taken over the farms' erstwhile land re-distribution rights. Before, a decision to allot land to urban dachniks, that is, for urbanites' second dwellings and attached parcels, was taken by a chairman of a collective farm (or a director of state farm). Now, to get rid of land that a farm cannot work any more, its chief executive officer has to transfer it to either rayon or local civil administrations.

By and large, in Russia as a whole, the demand for extra land for subsidiary farming and collective orchards and gardens of urbanites had been met by 1993. Exurbia, however, has been different in this regard, and here rural administrations have been willing to get hold not only of land inappropriate for large-scale farm operations but also first-class arable land suitable for construction.
Such land thus began to contract catastrophically. We will consider this process in a case study of Moscow Oblast.

However, mass administrative re-partitioning of land had been more or less wrapped up by 1994. The next stage, currently under way, has been associated with attempts to create a controlled land market. By this we mean the official endorsement of the market value of land and the ensuing land sales by the authorities. Actually the law "On Payments for Land" was introduced as early as 1992\textsuperscript{23}. It distinguished three forms of payment: land tax, rent, and normative price. At that time, however, the normative price was considered not as payment to the local budget but as an indicator of value of a parcel transferred to somebody's ownership as an inheritance or gift and whenever a bank required mortgaging land as a loan guarantee. However, normative prices did not actually work in land-sales transactions prior to the November 1994 ruling of the Federal Government, which stipulated the technique of determining the land tax rate. The latter depended on the quality and location of land. The ruling also required that the normative price be set as the land tax rate times 200. Beginning in 1995, the government embarked on the practice of annual adjustment of land tax rates. Minimal land tax rates are set by oblast, kray, and republic governments, which is why there are significant land-price differentials in the Russian Federation. In 1996, the average land tax rate amounted to 4000 rubles per 1 hectare of arable land, but the actual range of variation in European Russia was from 1913 rubies in Archangelsk Oblast to 11138 rubles in Krasnodar Kray\textsuperscript{24}. A visual analysis of the land tax geography by a statistically trained eye implies that the tax is a function of two variables, fertility of land and population density. Within settlements, including cities, the land tax rate varied from 100 to 2000 rubles per one square meter, that is, 1-20 million rubles per hectare. Additionally, land already occupied by residences is taxed at the level of 3\% of the existing urban land tax, that is, no less than 30 rubles per square meter. In this way, the tax varies from 300,000 to 600,000 rubles per hectare. Land tax in reputable health resorts and in recreational areas of Moscow and Saint Petersburg is set 2.5-4 times higher than the average in these regions.

Normative land prices, however, appear to be confined to the official paperwork legitimizing land deals and transactions, although in many areas, without substantial demand for land, such prices may work in real life. Not so in exurbia, where the real market price of land is determined by the interplay of demand and supply and may differ from the normative price by two digits.

Subsequently, the adopted laws stipulate only the mechanism of allocation of land tax revenues. Ten percent of this revenue accumulates in the oblast (or kray or republic) budget; between 20-50\% goes to the Federal budget, while the remaining part goes to local administrations. However, there are no consistent stipulations as to how to handle revenues from land sales. Usually wherever land sales are official, money goes to the so-called extra-budget fund that local, rayon, and town administrations spend at their own discretion. The absence of clear-cut stipulations of land sales and the availability of a shadow land market alongside the official one leaves a lot of room for all sorts
of abuses and profiteering by local officials involved in land allocation. It should also be taken into account that official and unofficial selling of land in exurbia is often practiced for the replenishment of deficient budgets of various enterprises and institutions. It would be impossible for one to describe all the shadow and semi-criminal mechanisms that are at work and we do not aspire to do this. Still, we will show later in this report, some of the results that the land re-distribution mechanisms, both overt and covert, lead to.
Executive Summary

Moscow Oblast, with a population of 5,000,000 people, is different from both the city of Moscow and the adjoining oblasts of Central Russia. In some respects (e.g., employment in education and research, growth of employment in finance, composition of industry, etc.), the oblast has risen to the level of the city; in some others (reported personal income, unemployment, industrial decline, employment in retail trade, etc.) it has sunk to the level of the surrounding periphery and below. Ironically both these results stem from the tight interaction of Moscow Oblast with the city of Moscow.

Moscow Oblast is a transitional area between the city and the surrounding oblasts of the Industrial Center in terms of population density and the electoral behavior.

The two-pronged regionalization pattern of Moscow Oblast by concentric ring and geographic sector reveals an uneven distribution of population. For example, 65% of the oblast’s total population lives in the northern and eastern sectors; in the western sector cities are scarce and there is a vast area of rarified settlement. The inner ring’s population density, 575 people per square kilometer, is in between that of New York’s and Chicago’s suburbs.

The reversal of the centripetal population growth in Moscow Oblast (1990-1993) appeared to be short-lived. In 1993 the traditional core-periphery gradient had already resumed in population dynamics, with proximity to the city of Moscow being the chief factor of stability and growth. For example, the 1993-96 average rate of migration inflow per 10,000 population was 81 in the first ring, 64 in the second, 33 in the third, and only 25 in the most remote, outer ring.

Though there have been no recent comprehensive commuting surveys, and despite ambiguous factors supposedly affecting commuting, we believe that the mid-1980s situation, when 700,000 people commuted daily from the oblast to the city and about one-fourth that number from the city to the oblast, has not changed significantly.

Commuting to second dwellings, however, has most probably increased. Currently the country "estates" of Russian urbanites fall into five major categories: dachas, collective orchards, vegetable gardens, village homes, and cottages. The specific features of each of these types are described.

The 1992 program of low-story housing (cottage) construction has effectively degenerated into disparate attempts by and for the privileged few. However, in 1996, the area under detached cottages in the oblast, the only type of dwelling that promises to make the region more similar to American suburbia, amounted to 35,000 hectares.

Another suburban land-user, subsidiary farming by rural residents, is producing 77% of all the potatoes, 28% of the vegetables, 34% of the meat, and 14% of the milk marketed in Moscow.
Oblast, even as the total land under subsidiary farming is 17 times smaller than the landholdings of former state and collective farms.

In contrast, private family farms (registered independent businesses) contribute only 1.2% of the oblast’s agricultural output.

The bulk of farmland in the oblast is still under public-run farms, although the role of the oblast in provisioning the city of Moscow with food has been substantially reduced in the 1990s. Just as before, the output per unit of farmland has been in inverse proportion to the distance from the city in the 1990s, which underscores the high value of suburban farmland: an average hectare in the innermost ring produces 10 times more meat and 3-4 times more milk than one in the most remote ring, and one hectare in the inner ring yields three times more vegetables than in the remaining rings combined.

Yet it is farmland in the accessibility rings nearest the city of Moscow that has become the major loser in the 1990s: in the oblast as a whole its acreage decreased by 17%. A more detailed analysis, however, shows that this reduction concerned socialized farms only and was largely compensated for by the growing acreage of subsidiary farms and agro-recreational plots.

Our analysis of land transfers showed that, whereas in 1985 the ratio of de-facto private to de-facto collective land uses was 1:20, in 1996 it was 1:4. Of the 500,000 hectares taken away from state and collective farms and their surrogates, over 200,000 ended up in private hands through the mediation of local authorities.

In the 1990s, normative prices were set for land in Moscow Oblast, and the procedure for determining the price of different types of land use is described. Normative prices, however, are significantly short of real market prices usually charged for recreational plots. The geography of such prices has a pronounced core-periphery gradient with the highest prices (over $4000 per 0.01 ha) charged west of Moscow.

Field observations of recent land-use changes in two rayons, Krasnogorsk, west of Moscow, and Shchiolkovo, northeast of Moscow, give concrete expression to the above generalities. Our observations confirmed the crucial role of local and rayon administrations in land re-allocation processes. These two tiers of civil administration wage a tug of war for the lucrative right to dispose of land. In particular, a characteristic solution was resorted to in both exurban rayons to purchase land for local residents in more remote rayons of the oblast in order to be able to sell local land nearer Moscow to wealthier customers from the city.
Executive Summary

Around Yaroslavl, core-periphery contrasts are no less vivid than around Moscow, although the former contrast does not exhibit as much spatial symmetry. In fact, aside from Yaroslavl Rayon, that is, the environs of the oblast center, the belt stretching along the Volga River toward Rybinsk and Kostroma and the belt stretching along the railway line and highway to Moscow are more densely settled than the rest of the oblast.

Rural depopulation has affected all of the oblast; in fact, while rayons headed by Yaroslavl and Rybinsk lost only 20-30% of their 1959 rural population, the entire oblast lost two-thirds.

The city of Yaroslavl and its rayon have stood out as major migration magnets. Only for a short period of time, 1990-1994, was the situation reversed, with some peripheral and semi-peripheral rayons attracting more migrants.

The spatial polarization of the countryside reveals itself vividly in agriculture, with Yaroslavl and other relatively densely settled rayons showing much higher productivity per unit of land than the outlying rayons.

The accepted regionalization pattern includes exurban, semi-exurban, semi-peripheral, and peripheral rayons.

The immediate environs of Yaroslavl are more agrarian compared with those of Moscow. Even after a substantial transfer of farmland, agriculture still accounts for two-thirds of Yaroslavl Rayon land. Sites of individual housing construction are not nearly as widespread as around Moscow: after 1000 ha with newly built cottages were absorbed by the city of Yaroslavl, only 500 ha of land under private construction remain in the rest of the oblast.

The normative prices of farmland in Yaroslavl Oblast vary by a factor of 1.5 as compared to 8 in Moscow Oblast, with the highest prices in Yaroslavl’s immediate environs being on a par with those in remote rayons of Moscow Oblast. However, real market prices of land intended for services and cottages are much higher, up to $2000 per 0.01 ha in the vicinity of Yaroslavl.

Genuine privatization of land is in an embryonic stage: in 1996 private landholding accounted for 7.5% of the oblast’s total land area, one-third of the corresponding percentage share in Moscow Oblast.

Yaroslavl Rayon has remained one of the main suppliers of farm produce to the city of Yaroslavl, but whereas the principal problem before was how to increase production, today it is how to sell what is being produced. A natural solution might be to establish ties with the Russian North, but the oblast’s farming functions more like a classical von Thunen’s isolated state. Polarization of the rural space and high transportation costs are the reason.
Pereslavl Rayon, midway between Moscow and Yaroslavl, is a peculiar exurban transplant with a seasonal (summer) rural population of at least 70,000 versus 26,000 permanent residents.

Finally, a comparison of Moscow and Yaroslavl Oblasts reveals the comparative hierarchy of rayons in the core-periphery continuum. It appears, for example, that only an insignificant portion of Yaroslavl Oblast possesses the conditions of a true suburbia.
CONCLUSION

Our analysis has been one of many attempts to monitor and interpret changes unfolding in post-Soviet countries. While researchers work from various professional perspectives and focus on different subjects, some lines of force have crystallized in the magnetic field of post-Sovietology. For example, the recently coined term "transitional economy" is now widely used, and the "Geography of Transition" has become a recurrent headline for members of the Association for the American Advancement of Slavic Studies. Apparently responding to the growing independence of regional elites in Russia, the Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies has spearheaded analytical workshops on Russian regions.

Although our research did not overtly stem from the above niches in the post-sovietological research community, it has a similar agenda. The analysis presented here is clearly both "transitional" and "regional." Moreover, it is "transitional" not only in the sense that it focuses on current historical shifts but also because of the nature of the entities we are writing about.

The environs of Russian cities, areas that are neither quite urban nor rural, have not attracted much attention among Russian-area-studies specialists. We believe that it is high time to fill this void, if only because urban margins are unique in terms of the sheer magnitude of their on-going land-use shifts. In its turn, land use and its attendant regulations provide an important cross-section of Russia's economic and political reforms. Although it is not yet clear whether changes in land use will be truly profound and far-reaching all across Russia, suburbia is already a testing ground for those changes. So far only there, has a free market in land, at least in some instances, made it to the surface of public life. This market is recognized and has already affected scores of people. It has been propelled by the enormous pent-up demand for recreational dwellings and plots, long a specific feature of the environs of Russian and East European cities.

We began our analysis by laying out our understanding of the crucial differences that have set Russian urban margins apart from their Western, especially American counterparts. These differences are so significant that they have not been dramatically affected during the current stage of transition, although some developments, like cottage construction, have already begun to "Americanize" Russian suburbs. However, like other historical borrowings from the West, and this is especially true of this instance, on Russian soil the phenomenon has all but shed its original substance (suburbia as a middle-class spatial niche) while retaining its original form (a detached family house outside a city).

Our analysis has shown that the environs of large Russian cities are still important migration magnets. In this regard, the reversal of the population's spatial dynamics when rural population resumed growth after 60 years of steady decline, turned out to be a fleeting phenomenon, rather than true, Western style counter-urbanization. Just as we were wrapping up this project the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation began to discuss the constitutionality of the Moscow Oblast law...
mandating that in-coming migrants pay for their registration as permanent residents of the oblast. The law in question is entitled "About Payments Due to the Budget of Moscow Oblast to Compensate Costs of Developing Infrastructure in Towns and Other Settlements and Ensuring the Well-Being of Citizens Relocating to the Oblast as Permanent Residents." This regulation requires that every migrant deposit the equivalent of a minimum of 300 monthly salaries, which in June of 1997 amounted to 25,000,000 rubles ($4310), a huge sum for the rank-and-file Russian.

The very existence of such stipulations unknown in democratic countries is a three-pronged phenomenon. On the one hand, it is clear testimony of the heightened attractiveness not only of large cities themselves (in the city of Moscow, an in-coming migrant was until recently required to deposit the equivalent of 500 minimal monthly salaries), but of their environs as well. On the other hand, the stipulation filters out prospective migrants, retaining only the wealthy in the pool. Thirdly, it is a glaring example of the power of increasingly independent regional authorities, a power that also shows up in other spheres of life (e.g., taxation, subsidies, privatization schemes, regional protectionism, etc.). Against this background it is hardly surprising that the passage of a new draft Land Code, supposedly an all-Russian regulation, by the Russian Duma did not receive any response in the major organs of Russian media. In fact this silence may be an indication that, at least concerning land use, an all-Russian law is less important than regional legislative initiatives.

A caustic remark made by Yulia Latynina in another context is apropos here as well: "In Russia, the breakup of the last traditional empire begot a quasi-market order, under which it isn't goods that are the principal article of commerce but tax favoritism, government rulings, and access to extra-budget funds. The second wave of reforms tries to do away with the most cheerless features of Russian financial feudalism, which, in skittish compliance with the Marxist philosophy of history, has come to succeed the slavery of GULAGs. At issue is who wins the tug of war, reformers or feudals. If feudals do, then in ten years Russia's index of human development will drop to that in Persia during the Sasanian period. That is indeed a good role model for a country where the economy is subject to state interference, whereas laws, army, and the right to collect taxes have been given away as truly private property."

While Latynina's statement is not without journalistic hyperbole, its last point appears to be exceedingly accurate. As our report shows, while land itself is not quite privatized, the right to distribute it is, and local authorities thus have become all but the main benefactors of land sales.

On the other hand, "financial feudalism" has not precluded some developments, in the vicinities of Russia's large cities, which are similar to those experienced earlier by many economically advanced countries -- for example, the declining role of so-called suburban agriculture. However, in Russia, where core-periphery gradients in agricultural land use do not hinge on transportation costs as much as on the depopulation of the vast rural periphery, the decline of farming in the "city's countryside" may be a mixed blessing at best. It seems that what lies ahead for
Russian suburbia, should the land market continue to shake off the fetters of "financial feudalism," is
the introduction of farmland preservation strategies of the kind that exist in Montgomery County,
Maryland, which includes "buying easements, or restrictions, on thousands of acres of farmland as a
fire wall against the spread of housing tracts."29 In other words, farmers would continue working
their land in exchange for selling developers the "rights" to build homes elsewhere in the environs of
a large city. Zoning ordinances may have to be enacted as well.

These preservation strategies seem to be unavoidable because of the high degree of spatial
coincidence of the demands for recreational and agricultural land. Note that the Russian notion of a
good dacha implies a much bigger plot than a single-family detached house in America usually has.
So the appetite for land in Russia is potentially greater. This appetite may affect the development of
the environs of Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Novosibirsk, Ekaterinburg, Perm, and the few other very
large cities of Russia. On the other hand, the hierarchy of suburban developments on which we
focused at the end of Part 3 does not portend a particularly heated competition for land around
smaller provincial centers in the near future.

In summary, whatever pattern suburban land use in Russia assumes, it needs to be carefully
monitored, as it speaks volumes about the real state of the Russian economy.

Table 2.18. 1985-1996 Changes in the Distribution of Land Users.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage Share</th>
<th>Changes in 1000 Hectares</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural</td>
<td>45.9</td>
<td>45.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Administrations</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Administrations</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry, Transportation and Defense</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest Administrations</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>39.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature Reserves, National Parks, and Public Recreation Sites</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Reserve</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the statistical form No 22 of Mosoblicem (unpublished data).
Table 3.4. 1986-1996 Dynamics of Land Use in Yaroslavl Oblast

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage Share</th>
<th>Changes in 1000 Ha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Socialized Farms</td>
<td>57.7</td>
<td>57.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Administrations</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rural Administrations</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Industry, Transport, and Defense</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forestry</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>28.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature Reserves, Parks, and Recreation</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Land Reserve</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Unpublished data of Oblkomzem.

Table 3.5. 1990-1996 Dynamics of Land Use in Exurban and Semi-Exurban Areas of Yaroslavl Oblast

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Exurbia</th>
<th>Semi-Exurbia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% Share</td>
<td>Change in 1000 ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialized Farms</td>
<td>74.8</td>
<td>64.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Administrations</td>
<td>0.1</td>
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<td>Rural Administrations</td>
<td>0.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Industry, Transport, and Defense</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>2.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forestry</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>19.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nature Reserves, Parks, and Public Recreation</td>
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<td>0.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Land Reserve</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Unpublished data of Oblkomzem
FIGURE 1.2 Core-Periphery Gradient in Moscow Oblast’s Agriculture (in the 1980s). A: Farming as a Static Growth Cone; (D - Distance From the City of Moscow in Km; MR - Marginal Return-on-Capital in Roubles/1000 Roubles; Ln - Natural Logarithm; K - Maximum Radial Distance (r) From the City of Moscow); B: 1986 Gross Agricultural Output in Moscow Oblast Per 100 Ha of Agricultural Land. Source: Ioffe, G.V. Selskoye Khozyaistvo Niechernozemya: Territorialnye Problemy. Moscow, Nauka 1990, pp. 68 and 71.
FIGURE 1.4 Re-Distribution of Exurban Land in the 1990s: General Directions.
Notes

1Personal correspondence.


4Ibid., p. 247.


9For the exact evaluation of this share for Moscow and Yaroslavl see Tables 2.18, 3.4, and 3.5 (specifically, rows featuring Urban administrations and Industry, Transportation, and Defense).


15Ibid., p. 11 (quoted after Sergei Tarkhov).


19Ibid., p. 56.


22About the controversy over the draft code of land use laws see: Ioffe, G. and Nefedova, T. *Continuity and Change in Rural Russia.* Boulder, Westview Press 1997, pp. 146-152.


24Ibid.


26The event was reported by RFE/RL *Newsl ine,* vol. 1, No. 51, part 1, 12 June 1997. However, neither *Izvestia* nor Kommersant-Daily uttered a word about this until June 20, at which point we were writing this conclusion. In May 1996 a pro-communist Land Code was denied endorsement by the Federation Council, the upper chamber of the Russian Parliament. There was no great stir in the press at that time either, though all major media organs mentioned the event, as well as the earlier passing of the draft Land Code by the Duma, the lower chamber of the parliament.

27According to *The New Encyclopedia Britannica,* vol. 6, p. 375, Sasanians ruled Persia from A.D. 226 - 640 and established Zoroastrianism as its official religion.
