



DOI: 10.22363/2313-1438-2023-25-3-509-518

EDN: UNYYVI

Editorial article / Редакционная статья

Political Urban and Rural Studies: Introducing the Issue

Elena V. Morozova  ¹, Anna V. Volkova² 

¹ *Kuban State University, Krasnodar, Russian Federation*

² *St. Petersburg State University, Saint-Petersburg, Russian Federation*

 morozova_e@inbox.ru

Abstract. The increase in the political subjectivity of non-state actors, primarily megacities, has long been articulated, but still has not received sufficient understanding. The ongoing processes of urbanization and globalization, on the one hand, and the processes of deurbanization and deglobalization, clearly manifested during the pandemic, give rise to many complex tasks of political management that require new approaches both in practice and in the theory of politics. The editorial board presents the current issue of the journal devoted to analysing the problems of the city and the countryside from a political perspective, stating political urban and rural studies as a subdiscipline of political science taking its first steps.

Keywords: city, village, political subjectivity of cities, city-state, territorial branding, urban para-diplomacy, political mapping, third space, multiple heterolocal identities, rural political science, peasant studies

For citation: Morozova, E.V., & Volkova, A.V. (2023). Political urban and rural studies: Introducing the issue. *RUDN Journal of Political Science*, 25(3), 509–518. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2313-1438-2023-25-3-509-518>

Acknowledgements: The research is supported by the Russian Science Foundation and the Kuban Science Foundation within the framework of the 2021 competition “Conducting fundamental scientific research and exploratory scientific research by individual scientific groups” (regional competition), project No. 22-18-20059 “Policy of rural development of the Krasnodar Territory: the potential of intangible resources”.

© Morozova E.V., Volkova A.V., 2023



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/legalcode>

Политическая урбанистика и руралистика: представляем номер

Е.В. Морозова  ¹, А.В. Волкова² 

¹*Кубанский государственный университет, Краснодар, Российская Федерация*

²*Санкт-Петербургский государственный университет,
Санкт-Петербург, Российская Федерация*

 morozova_e@inbox.ru

Аннотация. Возрастание политической субъектности негосударственных акторов, и в первую очередь мегаполисов, давно проартикулировано, но все еще не получило достаточного осмысления. Продолжающиеся процессы урбанизации и глобализации и встречные им процессы деурбанизации и деглобализации, ярко проявившиеся в период пандемии, порождают множество сложных задач политического управления, требующих новых подходов как практики, так и теории политики. Редакция представляет выпуск журнала, посвященный анализу проблем города и деревни в политическом ракурсе, заявляя в качестве субдисциплины политической науки становящуюся политической урбанистику и делающую первые шаги политическую руралистику.

Ключевые слова: город, село, политическая субъектность городов, город-государство, территориальный брендинг, городская парадипломатия, политическое картирование, третье пространство, множественная гетеролокальная идентичность, политология села, крестьяноведение

Для цитирования: Морозова Е.В., Волкова А.В. Политическая урбанистика и руралистика: представляем номер // Вестник Российского университета дружбы народов. Серия: Политология. 2023. Т. 25. № 3. С. 509–518. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2313-1438-2023-25-3-509-518>

Благодарности: Статья подготовлена при финансовой поддержке РФФ и КНФ в рамках конкурса 2021 г. «Проведение фундаментальных научных исследований и поисковых научных исследований отдельными научными группами» (региональный конкурс), проект № 22-18-20059 «Политика развития сельских территорий Краснодарского края: потенциал нематериальных ресурсов».

You are reading the issue dedicated to the relationship of the social and political spaces of urban and rural areas — a topic that reflects one of the most significant contradictions and dilemmas of the 20th and 21st centuries. Politics, as a struggle for power, as the implementation of policies, as a way of coordinating public interests, takes place in a specific space. The administrative-territorial division of Russia includes 150 thousand settlements, more than 18 thousand urban and rural communities, and more than 2300 municipal and urban districts. And in these micropolities, various political entities — from government bodies to urban and rural network communities — come up with ideas and projects for the development of their territories. These are also the places where local political elites and local identity and political culture are formed.

Research at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries led to significant changes in the methodology and theory of political science. One of the most significant trends was the shift of research interest from the problems of nation-states to the special features of how transnational structures function and influence political subjects. The priorities of real politics and political subjectivity are shifting accordingly from the regional to the local level.

Today, urban studies, as a direction that analyzes the functional changes in the problems of cities and, above all, megacities, is perceived not only as a part of economic science, but also as a section of social sciences that considers the issues of the historical formation of city districts, urban ecology, and the protection of historical and cultural monuments, the problems of improving the environment and civil communications.

At the end of the 20th century, academician N.N. Moiseev [2000] characterized the growth of megacities as a “natural phenomenon” and the result of the self-organization of society; after a quarter of a century, this thesis is being backed by all new and new examples. Urbanization in many regions and countries of the world is not completed, the growth of cities and megacities continues. One of the options for solving the problem of determining the boundaries of the city has become the recently emerging trend of focusing on development in the logic of the formation of agglomerations. According to the 2021 census data¹, 16 agglomerations with centres in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Yekaterinburg, Kazan, and other large cities fall under these parameters in our country, where the city is an active core, sets the direction and meaning of the development of the territory. In Russia, over 70 % of the population lives in cities and other types of urban-type settlements, and the name of most subjects of the Russian Federation is determined by cities (Voronezh Region, Krasnodar Territory, Moscow Region, etc.). Given sparsely populated territories, uneven development of regions and a request for changing the borders for cities of federal significance (Moscow and St. Petersburg), the abovementioned problem seems to be very relevant for Russia. The breadth of the problems considered in public discussions shows that the logic of the existence of agglomerations is subject to significant criticism, although more than a hundred agglomerations that have been formed or are in the process of formation already have a significant impact on public policy management.

We can state that several countries (de facto city-states, such as Singapore) are approaching the actual definition of the city, and the management of Moscow and St. Petersburg, as projects of the super-agglomeration of the future, can be correlated with the government of a whole country in terms of the complexity of tasks and their

¹ Rosstat presented preliminary figures on the population in the regions of the country according to the All-Russian Population Census. Retrieved May 21, 2023, from <https://rosstat.gov.ru/folder/313/document/166784>

resources. The formation of the “Greater Sochi” agglomeration reflects global trends and makes us think about the role of citizens in the political life of society since original political ideas are produced and accumulated, new concepts of life are formed, and communication and electoral technologies are tested particularly in cities.

Large cities form their own socio-political practices and traditions of collective civic engagement, which are often innovative and ground-breaking. Urban planning and management, traditionally defined to the greatest extent by economic, pragmatic, and aesthetic functions, in modern realities, appear as political affairs, the result of complexly built communication processes.

If these aspects are not taken into account, urban planning will not solve the problem of optimizing urban space, which can lead to losing the social functions of the city, the true meaning of which is traditional, fixed locations, points and spaces of communication between citizens. Historically conditioned points of attraction provide an opportunity to combine meanings, and synergy from the mutual exchange and multiplication of resources, as, for example, the complex work of the Pskov Krom, the Kazan Kremlin, the Plotinka of Yekaterinburg, the Palace Square of St. Petersburg.

Megacities often create their own, very original constructions of power or models for organizing electoral processes, including the use of big data technology, artificial intelligence and blockchain in governance. At the same time, modern researchers around the world are worried and alarmed by the costs of the digital revolution and the destructive types of online civic activity (vigilantism, shaming), which are most relevant for large cities.

The interest of the political science community is not limited to studying the development problems and prospects of megacities. Small towns and urban-type settlements pose several questions to modern researchers, the answers to which, of course, will contribute to the growth of political knowledge. Small towns, where throughout the history of Russia, most citizens lived, determining the socio-cultural image of the Russian province and human capital, today can still rightly be called the backbone of the large country. It is these small towns that are more likely to require state support compared to large metropolitan areas.

Indeed, around the world, the prospects and dynamics of small settlements depend on the economic and political situation in the country and the world, as well as on the interests of states and the prospects for domestic politics. At the same time, the study of domestic and foreign experience in the functioning of small towns allows us to speak of significant reserves of spatial and institutional development.

The industrial revolution, general informatization and increased mobility of the population are forcing small towns and rural settlements to be actively involved in determining their competitive advantages and building the city’s image for ground-breaking positioning based on history, culture, customs, folklore, and the latest technologies. The development of communication technologies, improvement of infrastructure, and investments by the state in the development of the road

network create opportunities for the full functioning of both business and civil society. By and large, we are talking about creating a single space in which small towns complement the agglomerations of megacities. This is how the positioning and development of brands of such cities as Veliky Ustyug (the Votchina of Grandfather Frost), Kostroma (the Birthplace of the Snow Maiden), Lipin Bor (the Kingdom of the Golden Fish), etc.

From the standpoint of the need for a competent alignment of domestic policy and the development of tourism, monument cities deserve special attention, where there is a very high concentration of cultural heritage sites (Kirillov, Suzdal, Totma, Ples, Gorodets, etc.). Favourable conditions for the development of domestic tourism, the formation of tourist routes of national significance, should be supported by the state, business, and civil society structures.

One of the most difficult topics for public discussion by professional political scientists is the life and processes of public policy in the most “non-public” territories, in closed administrative-territorial formations (ZATOs), where all public services and structures and local governments are focused on special production and processes to ensure the safe functioning of organizations engaged in the development, manufacturing, storage of weapons, to ensure the processing of strategically important materials. The efforts of the state and civil society to ensure the rights, freedoms and interests of citizens are important both in practical and theoretical terms to ensure manageability and achieve high levels of public satisfaction, including in cities that ensure the country’s defence capability and the security of the state, where the regime access and requirements for the protection of state secrets require special living conditions for citizens.

The growing importance of the emotional factor in the management of modern public policy actualizes such topics as the study of “angry” citizens, new readings of Lefebvre’s [Lefebvre 2015] “right to the city” and aggravated under the conditions of the “new reality”, especially during the pandemic.

The desire to actively and consciously transcend formal political and administrative boundaries, in turn, leads to fundamental changes in the social, economic and political identity of the communities involved. Scholars and politicians around the world are forced to take into account the power of urban para-diplomacy: public speaking, demonstrations, publications, symbolic urban ceremonies and exchanges. As a vivid example of the consequences of the “axiological turn” in the theory and practice of public administration, one can cite the interest in the formation and study of the axiosphere of cities and regions, the growing attention to such a phenomenon as twin cities, etc.

The burning question of who owns the urban space and how to implement this right in practice leads to the need to study the relationship between the political and non-political in urban life, the idea of political mapping of cities, monitoring network practices and studying the “third spaces” of urban everyday life.

Scientific schools of Tomsk State University, St. Petersburg State University, and researchers from Moscow, Perm, and Krasnodar Krai have accumulated significant empirical and theoretical material and implemented numerous grants and projects.

The institutionalization of political urban studies in Russian political science can be characterized as lagging, and its formation as an independent branch is far from complete. The appearance in the structure of the Russian Association of Political Science of a corresponding working group, and later — in 2022, the research committee on political urbanism, was, on the one hand, the recognition of a significant scientific backlog, and on the other, the advancement of trust and the desire to stimulate promising interdisciplinary research into the political space of the city, urban life, and public policy processes.

If political urban studies in Russia took the first steps in the process of institutionalization, then rural issues have been on the periphery of research interests in domestic political science for a long time. Everything connected with the village was perceived by the “urbanistic” optics of most researchers as an attribute of the outgoing traditional society, the study of which does not excite the scientific imagination of a political scientist. If sociologists, relying on the foundation of the classical works of P. Sorokin [Sorokin, Zimmermann 1929] and T. Shanin [2019], have quite successfully developed such a direction as the sociology of the village over the past decades, then in the problem field of Russian political science rural studies, or “the political science of the village”, are at the stage of a difficult start.

Outside of Russia, a direction of interdisciplinary research has been developing for a long time, which is literally called *rural studies*: it unites the representatives of almost all social sciences and humanities, including political scientists. The results of successful interdisciplinary collaboration are several encyclopedic publications [Cloke, Marsden, Mooney 2006] and authoritative scientific journals². The Russian interdisciplinary direction was called peasant studies, its institutional core was the Institute of Agrarian Problems of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Center for Agrarian Research of the RANEPa. The HSE Institute for Agricultural Research, established in 2018, has become a new research centre.

Local rural communities have become the focus of development policies, the most important direction of which is the development of the agricultural sector of the economy and rural territories, not only because of their economic potential and the relevance of food security issues but also as guardians of the cultural and natural landscape, supporting recognizable universally significant markers of national identity [Semenenko 2019]. At the meeting of the Presidium of the Russian Academy of Sciences, dedicated to the study of rural issues, it was especially noted that rural areas,

² The most representative and significant journal for understanding the phenomenon we are describing is the *Journal of Rural Studies*.

in addition to the main task of feeding the country, have a civilizational mission — the reproduction of national identity³.

The socio-political realities of recent years, including the tectonic geopolitical processes taking place in front of our eyes, act as powerful accelerators of rural research. Public administration institutions in countries and regions of the world respond to these changes by revising ideas about the development of rural areas: strategic decision-making on the development of the village is transferred from peripheral positions to the centre. The main factors prompting the nomination of the village among the strategic priorities are national food sovereignty and the problem of food shortages, the experience of mass migration of the urban population to the countryside during the COVID-19 pandemic, the digitalization of economic and social processes and the situation of digital inequality, which manifests itself both in regional and local levels.

The classic triad of “rurality” — living in the countryside, employment in agricultural production and adherence to traditional values — is rarely found today in the unity of all three components. In the modern world, multiple heterolocal identities are being formed, tied to several places of residence at once; there is a hybridization of “rural” and “urban”, a mixture of lifestyles. Rural labour is diversifying, and a rural precariat is emerging. The new actors of rural development are represented by people who were previously far from village life — the military, who retired and settled in whole “colonies” in the countryside, residents of eco-villages, groups of parents with multiple children who moved to the countryside for permanent residence. These migratory flows are in line with the global trend of ruralization. Digitalization and the rapid rise of social media have given life to a new subject of rural identity formation — rural bloggers. Many of them have audiences of thousands and even millions, and most of them combine work in personal subsidiaries or peasant farming with blogging.

The study of rural subjects requires special attention to regional features and the specifics of the development of rural areas. There are significant disproportions in the development of rural areas in different regions, and the reason may be not only natural and climatic differences but also the quality of management. The ongoing depopulation of rural areas adds drama to these processes.

The 2022 events in the Netherlands showed the super-urgency of the “rural” agenda — the Farmers and Citizens party, created on the wave of farmer protests, won in March 2023 regional elections in most (three-quarters) of the country’s provinces⁴. The farmers’ protest was directed against the government’s plans to close several farms or significantly limit their productivity, and in a broader context against the absurdization of the “green agenda” at the political and managerial level. The above

³ RAS: the reason for the plight of the village is the lack of funding. Regnum (Electronic Resource). Retrieved April 28, 2023, from <https://regnum.ru/news/innovatio/3148979.html>

⁴ Dutch farmers return the flags to the correct position. Peasant news. Agrobusiness newspaper (Electronic Resource). Retrieved April 28, 2023, from <https://kvedomosti.ru/?p=1134592>

example is only one of a deep demarcation between the “green radicals” and the producers of agricultural products that has manifested itself in many countries.

The study of modern problems of the city and the countryside gives wide scope for the use of interdisciplinary research strategies, the formation of network expert communities and network information resources. This issue of the journal is aimed, among other things, at stimulating interest and highlighting the most promising research issues, and the editorial board very much hopes for the continuation and expansion of research topics within the framework of the directions stated here, for intensifying discussions and a fruitful exchange of views on such significant for modern Russian political science and public policy topics such as political urbanism and contemporary rural studies.

The first part of the volume, devoted to the theoretical foundations of political urban studies, opens with an article by *A.L. Bardin (E.M. Primakov IMEMO)* on the search for new resources for the development of urban strategies in the context of digitalization. *R.M. Vulfovich and V.F. Mayboroda (Northwestern Institute of Management RANEPA)* show the possibilities and limitations of legal and organizational nature for the formation of management systems for urban agglomerations. A young scientist from the *RUDN University named after Patrice Lumumba V.A. Podobueva* studies the politicization of the urban environment, summarizing the most significant theoretical developments of modern English-language scientific literature. And *Shide Feng (MGIMO University)* analyzes the relationship between urbanization, demographic policy, and economic growth in China.

The second part is devoted to the diversity of practices of urban political development. It is presented by case studies of Russian cities, new territories, and an important place for the modern Russian elite — Dubai — the sister city of Moscow⁵. *A.V. Volkova and T.A. Kulakova (St. Petersburg State University)* comprehend the institution of twin cities (very widespread in international practice, however vaguely defined) and its unobvious prospects in the context of the developing international crisis, at the same time focusing on the achievements and difficulties of twinning St. Petersburg and the cities of the “new territories”, first of all, Mariupol. *A.I. Kolba and E.V. Orfanidi (Kuban State University)* are engaged in the political institutionalization of urban communities and record the growth of their subjectivity with their simultaneous insufficient involvement in the system of political governance at the city level. *K.R. Paliy and R.R. Paliy (Northwestern Institute of Management of the RANEPA)* address the political problems that cause the deindustrialization of cities in the context of globalization. They see a way out in the policy of revitalizing industrial facilities as a model for the development of the urban environment based on cultural identity, as well as in the organization of new public spaces and the creation of conditions for the development

⁵ International Association "Twin Cities" Retrieved May 23, 2023 from Retrieved from https://web.archive.org/web/20160601181101/http://goroda-pobratimy.ru/index/spisok_porodnennykh_gorodov_2/0-12

of cultural dialogue. *M.I. Kolykhalov (Siberian Institute of Management — a branch of RANEPА)* explores the process of Dubai’s formation as a “world city”, which has passed through a series of stages from a “major city”, through “international” and “global” without visible historical, geographical, and economic prerequisites, only due to the political will of the UAE authorities. *A.V. Kurochkin (St. Petersburg State University, RUDN)* together with young scientists *A.G. Dedul and L.S. Shalev (St. Petersburg State University)* is studying the deployment of innovative management technologies (digital systems) for the management of both business enterprises and urban and municipal entities, which brings both new opportunities and new risks. *Yu.V. Ukhanova (Vologda Scientific Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences)* explores the features of offline and online practices of interaction between the public and authorities and the conditions for their formation in urban development issues.

The chapter dedicated to the political theory of the countryside opens with an article by leading Russian authors on this topic — *I.V. Miroshnichenko, I.V. Samarkina and M.V. Tereshina (Kuban State University)* on the role of intangible resources for the development of rural areas and the formation of human capital in rural communities. The School of Rural Studies of *KubSU* is also represented by an article by *V.N. Rakachev*, who studies the policy of spatial development of the territories of the Russian Federation on the example of the Krasnodar Krai. *M.V. Pevnaya, A.N. Tarasova and E.R. Yakubova (Ural Federal University named after the First President of Russia B.N. Yeltsin)* examine the problems of settlement development in the context of civic participation of young people in small towns and rural settlements in comparison with the behaviour of young residents of large cities. Moreover, the traditional chapter for our journal — “Political Science of Youth” [Popova, Kazarinova 2021], was not left without meaningful content. The article by *A.G. Arutynov (Lomonosov Moscow State University)* on the peculiarities of urban and rural practices of preparation (including political technology), implementation and legitimation of remote voting results completes the section and the entire issue.

Received / Поступила в редакцию: 11.05.2023

Accepted / Принята к публикации: 15.06.2023

References

- Cloke, P., Marsden, T., & Mooney, P. (Eds.). (2006). *Handbook of Rural Studies*. London: Sage Pub.
- Lefebvre, H. (2015). *Le droit à la ville*. 3-e édition. Paris.
- Moiseev, N.N. (2000). *The fate of civilization. The Path of Reason*. Moscow: Yaz. rus. Kultury. (In Russian).
- Popova, O.V., & Kazarinova, D.B. (2021). In search of political youth studies as a subfield of political science: Editorial introduction. *RUDN Journal of Political Science*, 23(1), 9–17.
- Semenenko, I.S. (2019). The rural local community in development policies in Europe: Discourse and agency. *South-Russian Journal of Social Sciences*, 20(3), 6–27. (In Russian).

- Shanin, T. (2019). *The Awkward Class: Political Sociology of Peasantry in a Developing Society: Russia 1910–1925*. Moscow: Delo. (In Russian) [Shanin, T. (1972). *The Awkward Class: Political Sociology of Peasantry in a Developing Society: Russia 1910–1925*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.].
- Sorokin, P., & Zimmerman, C. (1929). *Principles of rural-urban sociology*. New York: H. Holt.

About the authors:

Elena V. Morozova — Doctor of Science in Philosophy, Professor of the Department of Public Policy and Public Administration, Kuban State University (e-mail: morozova_e@inbox.ru) (ORCID: 0000-0002-1369-7594)

Anna V. Volkova — Doctor of Science in Political Sciences, Professor, Department of Political Governance of the Faculty of Political Science, St. Petersburg State University (e-mail: AV.Volkova@rambler.ru) (ORCID: 0000-0002-3687-5728)