

Pragmatism Vs Egoism

An important feature of Russia's economy is a giant part played in it by distances including distances between towns and a variety of conditions generated by them. The distances affect the costs of shipping products from manufacturers to consumers, forms of interaction, and coordination of economic agents. This is not limited to transportation tariff regulation and tax breaks compensating various factors that raise manufacturing costs and make goods and services more expensive.

Of great importance here is adjusting the economic environment that impacts decision-making by various economic agents in a way that preserves the wholeness and coherence of the economic core of a territory that experiences the 'burden and curse of space'.

If separate steps and measures of support usually target economic efficiency in a localized project, the adjustment of the economic environment aims to bring stability and achieve socio-economic effectiveness in an aggregate of projects that are often distributed in space. The stability also relates to achieving a broad and multi-aspect system of values and preferences. Those include the already proverbial SDG (Sustainable Development Goals), goals, and values that arise from peculiar territorial features, culture, and way of life of indigenous peoples.

Consequently, the measures that support local commercial project goals may be described as encouraging economic egotism while systemic measures that take into consideration a broader range of ecological-social-economic conditions represent a more balanced pragmatic approach.

Egotism takes into consideration the interests and results of special interest groups (economic agents) based on using obvious advantages of this or that territory, this

or that activity. Pragmatism considers a far broader range of conditions and assumes that a lot more factors and circumstances are complementary and produce synergy.

An 'egotistical' approach cannot dominate in defining project perspectives when it is implemented in a vast and poorly (socially and economically) developed territory. This is only possible at the very start of its colonization while further development is impossible without enhancement, refinement, and diversification within interconnected and expanding socio-economic fields.

It is obvious (and the pages of ECO including this issue contain plentiful examples thereof) that the implementation of such projects is impossible without the participation of local communities – from business representatives to various public organizations.

The transition process from an egotistical to a pragmatic model requires consistent and purposeful efforts. To boot, as with every real process this transition cannot be smooth and problem-free. Adjusting the economic, and broader institutional environment as part of a pragmatic approach raises high demands towards the level of qualification and 'contractual capacity of all participants.

These aspects are considered in a thematical article collection of the current issue of ECO. Due to considerations expressed earlier, resolving pressing problems of socio-economic development of Asian Russia (including Siberia, the Arctic, and the Far East) requires a special approach to their strategic articulation and their further implementation (the paper by V.A. Kryukov, N.I. Suslov, and M.A. Yagolnitzer). A key part is played by the complex understanding of interconnection and interdependence of various types of economic activities on a vast territory. In particular, initiating and implementing projects that aspire to produce an 'investment impulse' must take into consideration technological ties responsible for deep and

qualified processing of various resources and raising the internal demand for goods and services.

‘Reasonable pragmatism’ is unthinkable without coordination of its ‘objectively natural’ and ‘subjectively institutional’ factors (see the paper by N.V. Lomakina and A. D. Feinman).

Unfortunately, one must admit that all too often the economy of the country as a whole as well as cases involving its separate regions and sectors register regress (deterioration) relative to the earlier achieved level of interconnection and interdependence. One of such manifestations is the ‘Siberian paradox’ revealed while analyzing opportunities to use a balneological potential for development of rural territories of Siberia and the Far East, to be precise – the combination of ‘green demand’ and ‘brown supply’ (the paper by I. P. Glazyrina, N. V. Pomazkova, and O. Ts. Darmayeva).

The authors draw attention to opportunities and observed realities of using rural territories and, above all, the necessity to abandon a widespread practice of ‘egotistical’ approach to resolving tasks of spatial development when territories are granted a special status and have a management structure to support it. This approach targets generalized ‘reported’ indicators that have little to do with the state and dynamics of internal socio-economic processes.

A clear description of problems and restrictions of the ‘egotistical’ approach without any positive changes is given in the example of forestry of the Far Eastern federal okrug (the paper by N. E. Antonova). “The resource component remained and remains dominant – production and export mainly consist of raw materials and products of primary processing”. The ‘roundwood’ or simply a log was and still is the “pillar” and the basis of our economy. It is even more vexing that the development of this industry has all the chances to be a priority within the “low-carbon” economy of the country as a whole and its regions.

Interconnections, cooperation, spatial synergy cannot but be priorities of the functioning and developing economy of Russia and its constituent parts. Their real implementation cannot be restricted to steps and measures of “organizational and structural character” – establishment of further ‘zones’ and ‘territories’ – without taking into account spatial peculiarities of creation and distribution of social value. The latter, in its turn, is inconceivable outside of a pragmatic balanced approach with the active participation of all interested parties – business, authorities, and society.

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