

# Keep up with the times

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For many years “ECO” has been writing about the influence of unique and diverse natural, historical, cultural, geographical and other conditions of our country on the process of analysis, assessment, decision-making and implementation of decisions in the socio-economic sphere. We are driven to this effort not only by the desire to reflect the real picture of life, but also by the recognition of the determining role of the above-mentioned conditions. Blind adherence to general theoretical dogmas and “universal” approaches that have had a positive effect in other cultural-historical and natural-geographical conditions, as a rule, brings nothing but disappointment. However, this does not mean that there are no general regularities and trends of certain socio-economic processes in different countries and conditions. It is important to understand them and be able to apply this knowledge in specific economic practice, including macro- and microeconomic approaches.

The most important regularities, which are present in the majority of countries of the modern world, include: a) strengthening dynamics of all socio-economic processes without exception; b) increasing role and significance of the social orientation of decisions taken and implemented (especially long-term, strategic); c) increasing importance of the spatial factor.

One of Russia’s leading regions in terms of its natural, spatial, cultural and historical potential is the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia). It occupies more than 16% of the country’s territory and covers a colossal area – from the middle belt of its eastern part to the Arctic zone inclusive. The composition and characteristics of its natural riches are so impressive that the region can compete, for example, with Australia. These include minerals – gold, diamonds, hydrocarbons, rare-earth metals, and such unique resources as mammoth bone<sup>1</sup> and impact diamonds<sup>2</sup>, and so on and so forth. We should separately mention the community of peoples

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<sup>1</sup> *Pfitzenmaier E.V.* To Siberia for the mammoth. Essays from the journey to North-Eastern Siberia // Edited and supplemented by N. Mighty. Translated from German by N. Neman. M.-L.: State Publishing House, 1928. 182 p.

*Kirillin N.D.* Fossil mammoth bone – a special geocryogenic natural resource // ECO. – 2009. – № 8(422). – P. 54–63.

<sup>2</sup> *Masaitis V.L., Maschak M.S., Raikhlin A.I., Selivanovskaya T.V., Shafranovsky G.I.* Diamond-bearing impactites of the Popigai Astrobleme. MOSCOW: URSS. 1998. 180 p.

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living in this vast territory<sup>3</sup>, who have accumulated a unique experience of life and economic activity in the extreme natural and climatic conditions of the Far North.

It is quite reasonable to assume that with such a significant natural resource potential and the relatively small population living in the territory, the latter's standard of living and its growth rate are known to differ from the national average indicators to a greater extent.

Positive dynamics is especially characteristic of the indicators related to the extraction of minerals – previously mainly diamonds and gold, now also coal and hydrocarbons. However, given the overall positive macro-regional dynamics of socio-economic development, there are significant differences from district to district (from ulus to ulus). It is quite obvious that those settlements and territories that were in the “zone of influence” of large mining projects have much better indicators of living standards of the population. For example, the inclusion in 1992 of eight uluses of Yakutia into the shareholders of the diamond mining company ALROSA significantly strengthened the budgets of the latter<sup>4</sup>.

It would seem that the solution to equalizing the socio-economic development of territories “lies on the surface” – to ensure the flow of added value from one district to another. However, in conditions of such a spatially dispersed settlement pattern, as in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), it is extremely difficult to implement such an approach. At the same time, there should be no question of permanent subsidization of remote areas outside the sphere of influence of large mining projects. First of all, because of the above-mentioned dynamic nature of the processes of development of those subsoil areas that either a) have been previously commissioned or b) are to be commissioned in the foreseeable future

The specific nature of natural resource potential (especially its mineral and raw material part) consists in continuous changes (as a rule, in the direction of complication) in the conditions of its development. This implies the need for constant changes, “fine-tuning” of the economic system of the vast region – from its transportation and energy infrastructure to approaches to the implementation of projects at various stages of implementation.

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<sup>3</sup> *Seroshevsky V.L.* Yakuts. Experience of ethnographic research // Edition of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society on the funds donated by A.I. Gromova. Edited by N.I. Veselovsky. St. Petersburg: Tipography of the Main Directorate of Udelovs, 1896. 674 p.

*Zenzinov V.M.* Old people at the cold ocean. Russkoe Ustye (Russian Ustye of the Yakutsk Region of the Verkhoyansk District). With a foreword by V.V. Bogdanov. 2nd edition, revised and supplemented. M.: Tipography of P.P. Ryabushinsky, 1914. 135 p.

<sup>4</sup> URL: <https://alrosa.ru/>

The thematic selection of the present issue of the journal “ECO” is devoted to this problem. One of the options proposed by our authors (and their opinion is fully supported by the editorial board) is the need to take into account in the system of state regulation of nature and subsoil use at the macro-regional level features of the changing resource base (papers by E.A. Grigorieva; N.S. Batugina and V.L. Gavrilov). These changes are associated not only with the size of mining objects to be studied and developed, but also with the increasing role of venture exploration and production companies. At the same time, however, the initial exploration and prospecting of new sites is entirely on the shoulders of the state. Only after the identification of promising areas it is possible to start implementing projects by attracting junior capital (paper by R.R. Nogovitsyn and A.A. Ivanov).

At the same time, it should be noted that today the development of junior mining business in Russia is at the very beginning of its journey (so far there are only isolated examples). The key reason, as it seems, is the absence in the country of stable foundations and formation of junior business and sources of its financing (junior capital). The main role in solving these problems belongs to the state – within the framework of, for example, the creation of a system of guarantees of invariability of conditions for the realization of such projects. It is well known that the huge financial resources of the Russian banking system are mainly directed to short-term lending. This does not mean, however, that we are calling for a return to state financing; rather, we are talking about the state’s participation in launching and developing new approaches to solving the problems of junior business development in the mining sector.

An extremely important feature of the development and support of junior companies is that they are focused not only on the development and extraction of certain sources of mineral resources, but also on the creation of so-called “social values” – in the form of both local employment and the application of unique skills and abilities of local residents<sup>5</sup>.

In Yakutia, such a unique and promising type of activity in the resource sphere is the extraction of mammoth bone (paper by T.S. Sofronova, E.V. Potravnaya and T.Y. Svintsova). Unfortunately, the socio-economic effect that can be obtained within its framework is constrained by the poorly developed regulatory and legal framework, i.e. the lack of rules aimed at expanding the role and influence of regional and local communities (however, the same can be said about all the issues presented above).

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<sup>5</sup> Kryukov V.A. On the study and development of strategic minerals in the framework of socio-economically oriented full-cycle projects // Bulletin of the Russian Academy of Sciences. 2023. Vol. 93. No. 7. P. 605–613. URL: <https://new.ras.ru/work/publishing/issues/41475/>

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Sustainable and progressive development of such territories as the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) largely depends on how and to what extent the task of adapting the system of state regulation of nature and subsoil use processes to changing conditions, on the one hand, and the specifics (geographical, cultural and historical, etc.) of a particular region, on the other.

In the distant past, the appearance here of extensive cemeteries of mammoths, whose remains today constitute an important part of significant natural resources, was due to the inability of this unique animal to adapt to the resulting climatic changes. For the sustainable development of the natural resource sector in regions such as the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), it is now necessary to get off the “mammoth trail” – to refuse to move on inertia, without taking into account the ongoing changes and, in particular, to develop without taking into account the increasing role of social guidelines for the implementation of projects in the mining sector.

In the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), as the materials of this issue show, there is both an understanding of emerging problems and a vision of ways and approaches to their effective solution<sup>6</sup>.

In this connection, one cannot but recall the prophetic words of D.I. Mendeleev<sup>7</sup>, who noted that for mining activities “...it is extremely important to develop good legislation, especially laws relating to the subsoil of the earth, which are already in many countries the property of the nation, not private property. ... mining is very important for the entire industry of the era and its coming can help a lot, and therefore in our time we must certainly be developed, and the State Duma will not fulfill its role if it does not put on the pedestal of the State Duma of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia).

It is up to the present generation – it is time, at last, to start practical realization of the advice of the great countryman and Citizen of Russia.

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<sup>6</sup> Extraction of mammoth tusks is proposed to be taken out of the shadow. Yakutian parliamentarians are waiting for amendments to the law “On Subsoil” // *Parlamentskaya Gazeta*..2021.10 Dec. <https://www.pnp.ru/top/site/dobychu-bivney-mamontov-predlagayut-vyvesti-iz-teni.html>

<sup>7</sup> *Mendeleev D.I. To the knowledge of Russia. With an appendix of the map of Russia.* 2nd edition, revised and supplemented. St. Petersburg: Edition of A.S. Suvorin, 1906. 158 p. [P. 80].