

Lessons in geometry

DOI: 10.30680/ECO0131-7652-2024-5-5-7

A distinctive feature of our country (and ECO has written about this on more than one occasion) is the enormous influence of space on all economic and social processes. Large distances, dispersion of centers (mainly, rather, focal points) of economic activity and places of settlement – all this significantly transforms the “canonical” ideas about the significant role of competition in the formation of effective and most acceptable solutions. The transformation does not negate the role and importance of initiative and entrepreneurship in the implementation of socio-economic projects, but it necessitates a mandatory and comprehensive consideration of the “spatial factor” in their formation and subsequent implementation.

Transportation plays a key role in connecting space and economy – road, rail, water, pipeline, and air transport... At the stage of economic development of the territory, it seems that interaction (rather than competition) of various modes of transportation is critical, taking into account their strengths and inherent limitations. This is eloquently evidenced by the historical experience of exploration and development of a considerable part of Russia, especially the East and the Arctic.

The process of formation and evolution of the transport system can (and should!!!) be presented as a solution to a multi-level, multidimensional problem – from ensuring the connectivity of the territory in order to create conditions for synergy between different spheres of economic activity in the medium and, even more so, long-term perspective, to the development of competition between different modes of transport – where economic (presence of a large number of economic entities) and infrastructural prerequisites for this have already been formed. In the latter case, it is undoubtedly a question of sufficiency and balance of logistics and transportation capacities. In this regard, it should be noted, for example, the obvious imbalance in the development of warehousing and logistics capabilities of a number of road transport hubs in the East of Russia (such as Novosibirsk and Krasnoyarsk), which are not provided with the necessary transportation infrastructure (especially in the suburbs).

A harmonious system of “space – economy – transportation” can be visualized in the form of such a triangle, which is stable to possible fluctuations of the “soil” on which it stands. But the triangle can be built only on the basis of a multilevel stage-by-stage approach, taking into account the multidimensional interdependent nature of all its sides.

The papers in this issue convincingly demonstrate that without a solid economic foundation – a diversified and dynamic economy – it is fundamentally impossible to provide solutions to transportation problems in a large part of our country (paper by V.Y. Malov, O.V. Tarasova, O.V. Valieva and E.A. Goryushkina). It is also necessary to take into account the dynamism of modern economic processes, changes due to objective circumstances (such as climatic changes), and, of course, to take into account the “human factor”.

As an example, one cannot fail to point out the “case” of the Ust-Kut district of the Irkutsk Oblast (paper by L.A. Bezrukov), the dynamic development of which (despite and even in spite of many negative “objective” circumstances in the development of the Baikal-Amur Mainline area) is associated not so much with the adaptation of approaches to the formation of the Upper-Lensky TPC (its project remained “on paper”), as with the initiative and energy of the team of Nikolai Mikhailovich Buinov, one of the founders of OAO Irkutsk Oil Company (INK). The latter has not only achieved outstanding results in the production of oil and condensate-containing gas, but has already completed the construction of a polymer plant and is close to obtaining industrial technology for the production of lithium carbonate (which the author of these lines had the opportunity to personally witness on September 8 of this year).

What is at the heart of INK’s success? Passionarity of the team leader and the ability to “look beyond the horizon”. It should be noted that such qualities have always been inherent in many “conquerors of Siberia” – from pioneer Cossacks to those leaders who promoted the idea of building the Trans-Siberian Railway and other no less grandiose projects (many of which were ahead of their time by many decades – see the work of I.I. Serebrennikov), built the Baikal-Amur Mainline – “looked” much further than the time in which they lived and worked¹.

In the context of the issues under discussion, China’s experience is very convincing, as it managed to form a transportation framework of a vast territory in a short period of time based on various modes of transportation, which gave a powerful impetus to its development (paper by S.N. Leonov and E.A. Zaostrovskikh). The main lesson is quite obvious: the root of success is the active participation of the state, not only and not so much as an investor, but as an arbiter and regulator of the process of realization of strategic priorities (paper by A.V. Kotov).

From this point of view, it is extremely important to take into account in detail all aspects of the creation and development of new transportation infrastructure, especially those of interregional significance (paper by A.N. Pilyasov and B.V. Nikitin). It is necessary to take into account not only the natural-resource or geostrategic potential of the territory, but also the scale and potential of those “related” scientific and technological problems that can provide a significant synergetic effect.

¹ *Serebrennikov I.I.* Note on the economic situation of the Irkutsk – Zhigalovo (Ust-Iлга) railroad area, probable freight turnover of this railroad and its continuation to the town of Bodaibo. Irkutsk: Irkutsk City Public Administration; Steam printing house of I.P. Kazantsev, 1912. 202 p. + Appendix.

Fedorov M.P. Economic situation of the Siberian Magistral” / Highly established Special High Commission for comprehensive study of the railroad business in Russia. SPb: Public Utility, 1912. 65 p.

Khobta A.V. Mikhail Ivanovich Khilkov and the Siberian railroad. Moscow: FGBU DPO “Training and Methodical Center for Education on Railway Transport”, 2021. 512 p.

Chervinsky P.P. Yuzhno-Sibirskaya railroad. District of the South-Siberian railroad in economic terms. SPb: Tipography of the joint-stock company Alfa, 1913. 496 p. + 30 l. ill.

A textbook example is the creation of transportation infrastructure projects within the boundaries of certain economic corridors (wide enough to ensure the efficient functioning of various modes of transportation).

Of course, the implementation of such projects is the responsibility of the state, and it is an extremely difficult task. Moreover, as the experience of the USSR shows, even within the framework of the centralized planning system it was not always possible to solve it. For example, for the construction of the first trunk gas pipeline from West Siberia to the European part of the country, “in July 1970, the first batch of pipes from Germany arrived and work on laying the first pipeline could have already begun. However, this was hindered by... roadlessness and the lack of railroads to transport the huge pipes manufactured by Mannesmann to the pipeline construction sites. As planned by the Ministry of Gas Industry, the pipeline would have been laid parallel to the old railroad ... the ministry had to decide between a longer and more convenient route, which would require the use of additional pipes, or a shorter and less convenient route, which would worsen the logistics of the project. Given the shortage of pipes, Mingazprom ... favored the shorter of the possible routes”².

Nevertheless, as a result, the railroad corridor failed to be properly developed and quickly fell into disrepair after the initial stage of construction of the trunk gas pipeline was completed – the railroad did not have any significant priority at that time. Today, however, various strategic documents on the development of railway transportation raise the issue of the need to build the Northern Latitudinal Railway, the route of which coincides at the initial stage with the old railroad...

“Transportation underdevelopment” of a significant part of the territory of our country emphatically demands the need to launch and implement new large-scale infrastructure projects, especially in the North and East of the Asian part of the Russian Federation. The basic condition for their organization is cooperation (interaction) of all interested parties – not only the state and big business, but also regions, municipalities and local communities. And the strategic goal is not only and not so much accelerated access to the markets of Southeast Asia, but rather the creation of conditions for sustainable and secure development of the Homeland.

Editor-in-Chief of the journal,
academician of the RAS



V.A. Kryukov

² *Hogselius P.* Red Gas: Russia and the Emergence of Energy Dependence in Europe. Moscow: Delo, 2024. 536 p.