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A new scientific publication on the economic and socio-cultural development of the Russian Arctic*

© Anton M. MAXIMOV, senior researcher

E-mail: amm15nov@yandex.ru

The RAS Federal center for integrated Arctic research named after N.P. Laverov, Arkhangelsk, Russia

Abstract. The article represents a review of the book by N.U. Zamyatina and A.N. Pilyasov “The Russian Arctic: towards new understanding of the development processes” and provides the reader with a new scientific publication on the Arctic topic. The book is very diverse in its subject matter. It focuses on the location and economy of the Arctic towns, the cycles of the development of the Arctic territories, the specifics and prospects of the Arctic business, the regularities of human capital dynamics and the opportunities for technological innovation in the Russian Arctic. The book contains a large amount of statistical data and it is well-illustrated with diagrams and maps. The book by N.U. Zamyatina and A.N. Pilyasov will be of interest not only to specialists in the economic geography, but also to researchers of social sciences and humanities.

Keywords: *Russian Arctic, frontier, innovative search, the Arctic entrepreneurship, towns-bases.*

This year, the publishing group URSS has released a new fundamental work on the book market. The book is on the modern development of the Russian Arctic by well-known Russian researchers, experts in economic and cognitive geography A.N. Pilyasov and N.Yu. Zamyatina [1]. It was issued under the title “Russkaya Arktika: k novomu ponimaniu processov osvoeniya” (“The Russian Arctic: a new understanding of the development”). The monograph is originally thought to be a landmark on the development of the Arctic territories of Russia. It is divided into two parts and consists of eleven chapters. Their topics range from spatial descriptions of the Russian Arctic to management issues and institutional development in the Arctic. At the same time, the whole palette of topics is held together by a common leitmotif: “the Arctic is a unique “motor” of innovative search and development, naturally embedded in the economy of Russia”.

The first chapter introduces the theme of the book, revealing the self-existence of the Arctic macroregion and its special role in the historical dynamics of the Russian state. To conceptualize the phenomenon of the Russian Arctic, the authors refer to the category of the frontier — a mobile border of developed, “indigenous” and promising areas. At the same time N.Yu. Zamyatina and A.N. Pilyasov stressed that the Central European and the Arctic parts of Russia had no “center-periphery”, relationship. Also, it is impossible the use of the concepts of “metropolis” and “colony”. And, we can only metaphorically speak about the periphery status of the Arctic. According to the authors, the essence of the Arctic “is that it suddenly became the center..., the front line, the front of the breakthrough efforts of the nation... Therefore this space of non-stationary settlements and young cities of the Arctic is organized by the microdistrict principle, not the “center-outskirts” principle”.

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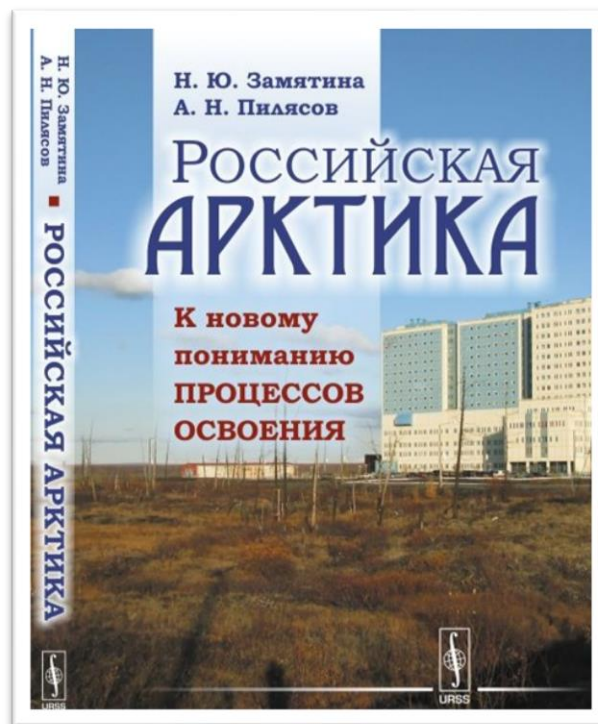


Figure. 1. The book cover

Geographical location, economy and infrastructure of the Arctic towns and villages are discussed in the second chapter. The authors systematized an impressive array of data, comprehensively reflecting the social and economic life of settlements in the Russian Arctic. The relatively high level of urbanization of the Arctic territories of the Russian Federation is emphasized: “in comparison with the foreign Arctic, Russia has a very powerful polar cities, with extensive industrial zones, which fit not to compare with the polar towns of other countries, but with the Ruhr, Wales, Silesia, and other industrial cities in the old industrial areas of the world”.

In the third Chapter, the authors clearly show the cyclical nature of the Arctic territories' development: the “pioneer” phase — the emergence of pioneers' network — is distinguished; it is replaced by the phase of super organizations (such as “Dal-Stroy” in the past or “Gazprom” now), which, in the next phase, are transformed and geographically shifted as the depletion of natural resources in the place of previous development. The first part of the book ends with a chapter on the Russian Arctic in the context of international relations on the development of the Arctic resources.

The second part of the book by N.Yu. Zamyatina and A.N. Pilyasov is a discussion of individual aspects of the life in the Arctic. It has a characteristic subtitle: “From Geology to Ideology”. We will highlight the most interesting, in our opinion, topics disputed by the authors in this part of the book.

The chapter on the Arctic entrepreneurship deserves serious attention. The theme was interpreted quite widely: from the owner of a small business to the manager-modernizer or scientist-innovator. In fact, in some relatively new works, thematically related to the industrial development of the Arctic territories of Russia, the emphasis is either on the activities of large Russian

corporations or on traditional economy of indigenous peoples, as well as on searching the ways of their constructive cooperation [2, Tishkov V.A., Kolomiets O.P., etc.; 3, Novikova N.I., Funk D.A.]. N.Yu. Zamyatina and A.N. Pilyasov also focused on the need to explore the possibilities of the Arctic territories as landfills for high-tech business projects.

In the next chapter, the authors advocate the realism of innovation projects, pointing to the prospects of “germination” of technological innovations on the “soil” of traditional forms of economic activity of the leading industrial companies. The complexities of large-scale projects to develop the subsoil of the Arctic territories and the shelf of the Northern seas require the introduction of new technological solutions, otherwise Russian companies risk losing their competitiveness and their share of the world market. At the same time, they are not obliged to take on all the tasks in the field of innovation: outsourcing and venture investment of medium-sized businesses, aimed at developing advanced technologies, could be quite successful. An example of such a scenario: the authors point to the experience of Canada. Thus, they expressed non-trivial opinion that contradistinction between the “commodity” and the high-tech economy was fundamentally incorrect for Russia.

It is also necessary to point out that N.Yu. Zamyatina and A.N. Pilyasov paid attention to the specific dynamics of human capital in the Arctic areas of the Russian Federation, showing the relationship between demographic processes, migration, development of labor resources, the culture and mentality of the population of the Northern territories.

In conclusion, we should point out that the book is rich in statistical material, generalized in illustrations: diagrams and maps. The book is written in a lively and accessible language.

The work of N.Yu. Zamyatina and A.N. Pilyasov is certainly one of the most interesting among the recent scientific literature on the social, economic and humanitarian problems of the Arctic development. It will be of interest not only for geographers and economists, but also for social scientists.

References

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2. *Rossijskaja Arktika: korennye narody i promyshlennoe osvoenie* [The Russian Arctic: indigenous peoples and industrial development]. Ed. by V.A. Tishkov. Moscow; Saint Petersburg, Nestor-Istorija Publ., 2016, 272 p. (In Russ.)
3. *Sever i severjane. Sovremennoe polozhenie korennyh malochislennyh narodov Severa, Sibiri i Dal'nego Vostoka Rossii* [North and northerners. The current situation of indigenous small-numbered peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of Russia]. / Ed. by N.I. Novikova, D.A. Funk. Moscow, IEA RAN Publ., 2012, 288 p. (In Russ.)