

Spatial Aspects in the Development of the Small Business Sector in the Region



**Eugeny M.
BUCHWALD**

Institute of Economics of the Russian Academy of Sciences
Moscow, Russian Federation
e-mail: buchvald@mail.ru
ORCID: 0000-0001-9892-5930



**Igor S.
BESSONOV**

Samara State University of Economics
Samara, Russian Federation
e-mail: igornews@rambler.ru
ORCID: 0000-0003-1118-336X

Abstract. Using the example of the small business sector, the paper analyzes the specifics of an emerging system for managing the spatial development of the economy in one of the regions of the Russian Federation. This aspect is currently regulated by a whole range of documents at the federal and regional levels, and its features include fragmentation, both vertically and horizontally. Currently, only separate blocks of spatial management processes are identified, which are partially interconnected. The described tasks are regulated by various documents: laws of constituent entities of the Federation, target programs, strategies and concepts for spatial or agglomeration development. The federal level has the Spatial Development Strategy of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2030 with a forecast up to 2036, which takes into account negative reviews of the previous document. The regional level has no unified approach to the development and implementation of spatial development documents as well. In order to substantiate the possibilities for improving strategic management in the spatial development of regions,

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we solved the following tasks: updating the approach to the consideration of the regional economic space; substantiating individual structural elements of the regional economic space – agglomerations and subregions – as objects of management; substantiating the possibilities of a strategic approach to managing the spatial development of the region's economy; analyzing best practices of sub-regional management in the regions; and substantiating practical recommendations to authorities on improving the regional management system at the sub-regional level.

Key words: economic space of the region, spatial potential, spatial development, regional development, small business.

Introduction

Currently, spatial regulation is an important component of economic policy at the federal and regional levels; this is emphasized by the Spatial Development Strategy of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2030 with a forecast up to 2036, designed taking into consideration some of the negative comments regarding the previous document. Important features of the spatial paradigm, which can be called a leitmotif of spatial development, were named by A.G. Granberg, who noted that “the Russian economy is not a mono-object, but a multiregional organism functioning on the basis of vertical (center – regions) and horizontal (interregional) economic interactions and is part of the system of global economic relations” (Granberg, 2006). In the framework of this approach, the key task of scientific studies and public policy is to combine regional diversity, integrity of national space and its integration into a globalizing world. A.G. Granberg points out: “In other words, Russia's path in the 21st century is the inevitable search for sustainable integrity in regional diversity with the increasing and unequal impact of globalization processes on different parts of the national space”¹.

At the same time, we note the multidimensional nature of the task of spatial development. On the one hand, it is necessary to maintain the stable

integrity and effective functioning of the single economic space (Bondareva, 2021; Urunov, Morozova, 2024). On the other hand, it is necessary to maintain balance amid the contradictions between the need to support growth poles in conditions of natural polarization of development and promote self-development of underdeveloped and depressed economic spaces, as emphasized by P.A. Minakir, founder of the first Russian specialized journal *Prostranstvennaya ekonomika* (Minakir, 2019).

Taking into account current challenges related to achieving technological sovereignty and ensuring socio-economic development sustainability, the issues of effective use of regional potential are coming to the fore. The spatial paradigm urges us to discuss the expediency of managing the development of the economic space, especially taking into account its fractality and the possibility of “fine-tuning” the regional management system – considering the meso-economic (sub-regional), municipal and local structural levels.

In the context of analyzing modern socio-economic challenges, it is of particular importance to study the impact of small enterprises, which are widespread, on spatial and territorial development. This economic sector, with its flexibility, adaptability and ability to generate innovations, can play an important part in diversifying the economy, creating new jobs and improving living standards. It also has a significant impact on the formation of spatial structure. Unlocking the spatial potential

¹ Granberg A.G. (2003). *Osnovy regional'noi ekonomiki: uchebnik dlya vuzov. 3-e izd.* [Fundamentals of Regional Economics: Textbook for Universities. 3rd ed.]. Moscow: Higher School of Economics. P. 17.

of small business at various levels of the economic space in economic, social and innovative aspects (Bessonov, Koroleva, 2023) can act as a tool for the development and recovery of the economy.

Thus, consideration of the socio-economic development of Russia requires taking into account the possibilities and development of spatial management mechanisms, including at the regional level. The aim of our work is to substantiate approaches and methods of strategic management of economic space development at the regional level using the example of the small business sector. The main research area is the spatial aspect of regional socio-economic development. The following tasks bridge existing gaps in scientific knowledge and are of research interest: updating the modern approach to the consideration of the regional economic space, associated with increased attention to intraregional development, theoretical substantiation of individual structural elements of the regional economic space – agglomerations and subregions – as potential management objects, substantiation of the possibilities of a strategic approach to managing the spatial development of the region's economy, analysis of best practices of sub-regional management in Russia's regions and substantiation of practical recommendations to authorities on improving the regional management system at the sub-regional level. Scientific novelty of the study consists in substantiating and testing a methodological approach to the spatial development of regional small entrepreneurship and identifying areas for improving socio-economic policy. The results obtained can be applied in strategic documents at the federal and regional levels.

Literature review

Approaches to the description of economic space as the basis of spatial development, which is understood as the development taking into account unevenness, heterogeneity, the allocation of poles of growth and periphery, can be revealed in four

established concepts: information (the main factors are telecommunication networks, information dissemination, researchers – R. Schuler (Schuler, 1992), R. Capello (Capello, 1994; Capello, 2002), H. Shibusawa (Shibusawa, 1999; Shibusawa, 2000)), process (complex economic process based on network interaction of agents, O.A. Biyakov (Biyakov, 2004)), resource (resource bases, opposition of centrifugal and centripetal motion, P. Krugman (Fujita et al., 1999)), territorial (territory and objects located on it, A.G. Granberg (Granberg, 2006)). Modern interpretations of economic space often combine different approaches. P.A. Minakir and A.N. Demyanenko combine territorial understanding (borders, natural zones) with economic interaction, considering space as a source of resources, an environment for living and for the development of markets (Minakir, Demyanenko, 2014). A.A. Urunov represents economic space as territory, geotory, aquatory and aerotory (Urunov, 2014).

The growth pole theory postulated by F. Perroux (1955) is one of the fundamental theoretical constructs in regional economics and spatial development. The scientist defined the growth pole as “a set of industries united by industrial ties and a dominant industry with the ability to generate economic growth and spread it to the surrounding area”. The concept of “polarization” also plays an important role, meaning the concentration of resources and activities at the growth poles and their outflow from peripheral territories. Other representatives of the French school of regional economics also contributed to the development of the growth pole theory. J. Boudeville (1966) focused on the geographical aspect of growth poles, considering them as territorial units with a high concentration of economic activity and influencing the surrounding areas. A. Hirschman (1958) in his unbalanced growth theory emphasized the need to concentrate resources in priority sectors and regions to stimulate economic development.

In Russian science, the growth pole theory has become widespread and has been adapted to Russian conditions. Russian scientists T.E. Kuznetsova and L.V. Nikiforov were among the first to substantiate the need to use a spatial approach (Kuznetsova, Nikiforov, 2013). V.N. Leksin, analyzing the processes of regional development in Russia, emphasizes the need to form supporting centers of innovation activity that can become locomotives of economic growth (Leksin, 2024). He notes that in Russia, with its vast territory and uneven distribution of resources, the formation of such centers is a key factor in ensuring sustainable development. O.S. Pchelintsev (Pchelintsev, 2006), exploring the problems of the regional economy, focuses on the need to develop “growth points” with innovative potential and capable of generating new knowledge and technology. N.V. Zubarevich, analyzing the socio-economic development of Russian regions, notes that the formation of growth poles is an important factor in increasing the competitiveness of the Russian economy; and that it is necessary to take into account the specifics of each region and design strategies based on the use of competitive advantages (Zubarevich, 2022). V.V. Klimanov, analyzing intergovernmental fiscal relations, says that the formation of growth poles requires improving the system of financial equalization of the regions. He emphasizes that it is necessary to create incentives for regions generating economic growth and provide support to lagging regions (Klimanov, Kazakova, 2022).

In modern conditions, the growth pole theory is acquiring new interpretations, shifting the emphasis from the sectoral to the territorial aspect and on the development of urban agglomerations as centers of innovation and economic growth. S.A. Kozhevnikov, summing up the results of modern spatial and territorial development in the European North of Russia (Kozhevnikov, 2019), noted the importance of linear-nodal multidimensional spatial organization with taking into account the allocation of large and small cities and villages, which in fact

once again underlines the relevance of the concept under consideration in modern scientific research.

Research methodology

The concept of economic space presupposes a variety of approaches to defining its essence; therefore, spatial development (development of economic space) can also be considered in many aspects. A.V. Suvorova distinguishes synonymous concepts by defining the following hierarchy: territorial development (a complex set of changes in the economy of a territory) – spatial development (change in the spatial structure of a territory) – development of the territory (changing the boundaries of the territory and the development of new locations) (Suvorova, 2019). We consider it appropriate to rely on the opinion of this author on the synonymy of the terms “economic space” and “economic environment”, since in this context it is easier to comprehend in scientific and practical terms the diverse approaches to the interpretation of this concept. Thus, economic environment surrounds economic objects, interacting with them (creating conditions and being influenced), and can be considered in the paradigms of information, process, resource, and territorial approaches.

The strategy for the development of small and medium entrepreneurship in the Russian Federation for the period up to 2030² identifies mass and high-tech sectors of activity. At the same time, the concretization of technological economic activities has not been carried out unambiguously. To fulfill the task of developing an indicator that includes small enterprises of progressive types of activity, the data from the methods of calculating the indicators “Share of high-tech and knowledge-intensive industries in the gross domestic product”³ were

² Strategy for the development of small and medium entrepreneurship in the Russian Federation for the period up to 2030. Available at: <http://static.government.ru/media/files/jFDd9wbAbApxgEiHNaXHveytq7hfPO96.pdf> (accessed: March 25, 2024).

³ On approving the methodology for calculating the indicators “Share of high-tech and knowledge-intensive industries in the gross domestic product”: Rosstat Order 832, dated December 15, 2017. Available at: <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/556157980> (accessed: April 15, 2024).

used. We used the “List of high-tech, medium-high-tech, and knowledge-intensive industries related to the regional level of the economy” to calculate the indicator “Share of high-tech and knowledge-intensive industries in the gross regional product” (Appendix 2 to this methodology).

Progress of the work

Historically, regional policy in Soviet Russia implied an equalizing approach to the regions and included the existence of a system of alignment and did not consider region-centered interests. Directive planning and centralized distribution were the basis of the command and administrative economy. In the modern economic system, the ratio of federalism and regionalism determines the balance between centralization of power and centrifugal forces. The region is considered by modern scientists in many ways autonomously within the framework of the concepts of quasi-state, society, corporation and market. Each of them presupposes the adoption of independent decisions based on the characteristics of the system of potentials of the regional economy and the self-determination of the regional community. Nevertheless, the single economic space of Russia, which defines fundamental principles and strategies of national development, appears to be a more significant paradigm. Based on the fractality inherent in the economic space as a whole (the principle of including smaller similar parts like a matryoshka doll), it is possible to give the following definition.

Regional economic space acts as part of a larger national economic space and represents a heterogeneously developing economic environment with signs of coherence and unity of institutions and specialization formed on the basis of common development, including a number of spatial structures – agglomerations, subregions, non-agglomeration spaces and centers of economic growth. Regional economic space, in turn, fractally includes sub-regional, municipal and local structural levels, each of which can be the subject of a separate study.

According to the Spatial Development Strategy of the Russian Federation until 2025, an important problem is the low level of socio-economic cooperation at both the interregional and inter-municipal levels (Bukhvald, Valentik, 2024; Ivanov, Buchwald, 2024). The issue of allocating elements of the intraregional economic space for appropriate stimulation of interaction is debatable. For example, A.G. Ataeva and A.G. Ulyeva, based on the analysis of socio-economic development strategies of the subjects of the Volga Federal District, identify the following subjects of inter-municipal interaction: municipalities, clusters, urban agglomerations, territories of advanced socio-economic development (Ataeva, Ulyeva, 2023, pp. 180–181).

Agglomerations in the Spatial Development Strategy of the Russian Federation until 2025⁴ are presented as the most progressive part of the economic space (“Transformation of the spatial organization of the economy” section), which contains the majority of the main elements of the region’s innovation potential and is based on developed logistics infrastructure systems. Historically, the development of urban settlements and urbanized territories has brought a synergistic effect to the formation of civilizational progress. Russia’s agglomeration network includes more than 40 large and major urban agglomerations, about half of which are connected to economic growth centers that provide a significant contribution to GDP.

The subregions represent a less saturated economic space, united by a common historical formation and close inter-municipal ties based on economic and geographical location and similar specialization. The theory of sub-regional development is in the process of formation and has not been widely disseminated in modern scientific literature and strategic documents. The approach

⁴ Spatial Development Strategy of the Russian Federation until 2025. Available at: http://static.government.ru/media/files/UVA1qUtT08o60_RktoOXI22JjAe7irNxc.pdf (accessed: October 5, 2024).

proposed in the Strategy for Socio-Economic Development of the Samara Region⁵ includes the description of the subregion as semi-peripheral, partially overlapping with the agglomeration territory, or completely peripheral part of the region, formed due to inter-municipal cluster connections.

To assess the heterogeneity of the Samara Region's economic space and illustrate the most progressive development within the Samara-Tolyatti agglomeration, we will analyze the development of the small business sector at the sub-regional economic level (*Tab. 1*). Small enterprises are of scientific interest due to their inherent ability to effectively carry out innovative search and promptly respond to changing market conditions, as well as because of the possibility to promote the development of the region's economic space by implementing the spatial potential of small enterprises.

The Samara-Tolyatti agglomeration represents the most populated part of the region and contains 83% of its population. As a result, there is a significant asymmetry in the spatial distribution of small

enterprises (91% of the regional total), including progressive types of activity (96% of the regional level). Thus, the agglomeration creates more favorable conditions for the development of high-tech and knowledge-intensive small enterprises. In our study we consider the composition of the Samara-Tolyatti agglomeration taking into account the municipalities that are fully part of it: urban okrugs of Samara, Tolyatti, Syzran, Novokuibyshevsk, Kinel, Chapaevsk, Zhigulevsk, Oktyabrsk; Volzhsky, Kinel'sky, Krasnoyarsky, Stavropolsky municipal districts.

The highest density of small enterprises (446.28 units per 10,000 people) was recorded in the Samara-Tolyatti agglomeration, while the rest of the subregions lag far behind. Thus, the Southern subregion ranks second with a value of 1.7 times less (260.69). Pokhvistnevsky subregion has the lowest value (175.01).

The density of small high-tech and knowledge-intensive enterprises also differs depending on the nature of the economic space: the highest index is 60.09 within the boundaries of the Samara-Tolyatti

Table 1. Analysis of the spatial development of small enterprises (legal entities and individual entrepreneurs) in the Samara Region at the sub-regional level, 2023

Subregion	Population, 2023	Number of small enterprises, 2023		Number of small enterprises of progressive types of activity, 2023	
		Total, units	Per 10,000 people	Total, units	Per 10,000 people
Samara-Tolyatti agglomeration	2600626	116062	446.28	15626	60.09
South-Western	74146	1552	209.32	100	13.49
Syzransky	227342	5387	236.96	476	20.94
Otradnensky	110247	2435	220.87	181	16.42
Neftegorsky	55777	1114	199.72	54	9.68
Pokhvistnevsky	78622	1376	175.01	74	9.41
Sergievsy	114199	2193	192.03	123	10.77
Southern	65980	1720	260.69	79	11.97

Calculation sources: Unified register of small and medium enterprises. Available at: <https://ofd.nalog.ru> (accessed: April 10, 2024), Permanent population of urban okrugs and municipal districts of the region. Samara Statistical Yearbook. Available at: <https://63.rosstat.gov.ru/folder/34255> (accessed: April 10, 2024). The number of population is given as of January 1, and the number of small enterprises as of January 10.

Urban okrugs Syzran and Oktyabrsk were included both in the Samara-Tolyatti agglomeration and Syzransky subregion in accordance with the Strategy for Socio-Economic Development of the Samara Region until 2030.

⁵ Strategy for Socio-Economic Development of the Samara Region until 2030. Available at: https://economy.samregion.ru/upload/iblock/82a/strategiya-so_2030.pdf (accessed: October 15, 2024).

agglomeration, among other subregions it varies from 20.94 (Syzran), which is 2.87 times less than the agglomeration, to 9.41 (Pokhvistnevsky). Thus, the Samara-Tolyatti agglomeration is sharply distinguished by its high density of small enterprises, while the imbalance in the density of high-tech and knowledge-intensive small enterprises is more pronounced.

Another important aspect of development is the level of investment activity. Due to the limited information resources, data from the continuous statistical monitoring of small and midsize business for 2020 were used⁶ (Tab. 2).

In absolute terms of the volume of attracted investments, the Samara-Tolyatti agglomeration is undoubtedly the leader (53,055 million rubles, which is more than 86% of the total investment in small enterprises in the region), noticeably ahead of the subregions (figures range from 993.9 million in Neftegorsky subregion to 2 082.7 million in the Southern subregion). The relative volume of investments per 1 small enterprise is most important in the Southern subregion (1833.34 thousand rubles), the least in Syzransky subregion (417.03

thousand rubles). At the same time, the Samara-Tolyatti agglomeration does not occupy a leading position with an indicator of 791.92 thousand rubles.

To confirm the hypothesis of a decrease in the share of investments by small enterprises as we move away from the center of the region, let us turn to the cartogram of investments in small enterprises from the regional volume in the municipal context (Figure).

It shows that the largest share of investments falls on the central part of the Samara Region, followed by a lower percentage in the surrounding areas, and municipalities with the lowest shares are represented as they move away from the center. However, the location of the most developed municipalities does not fully coincide with the agglomeration zone, showing, for example, a high level of investment in Krasnoarmeysky and Pestravsky districts south of Samara.

The results obtained prove the heterogeneity of the spatial development of the small business sector and the presence of significant potential, which reinforces the need to develop approaches and

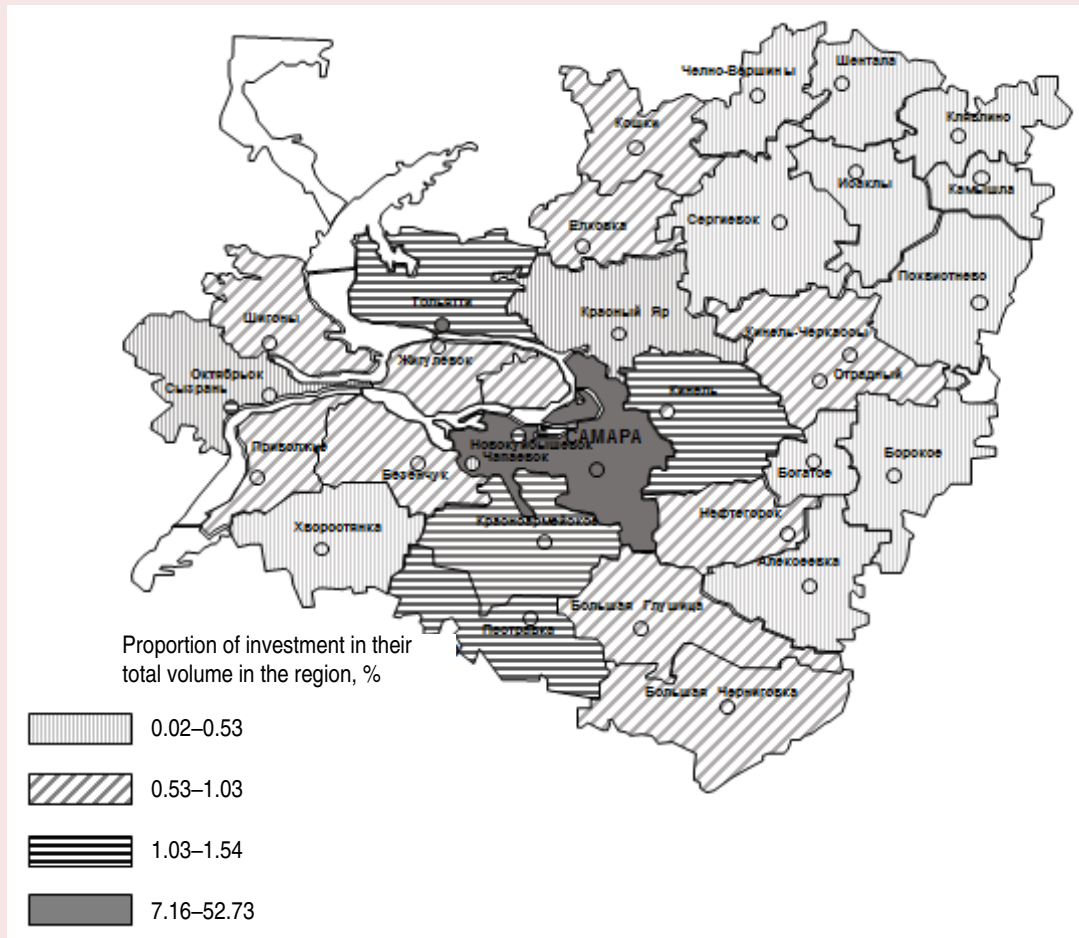
Table 2. Investments in small enterprises of the Samara Region at the sub-regional level in 2020 (individual entrepreneurs and legal entities)

Subregion	Number of small enterprises, units	Investment, thousand rub.	Share of investments in the total volume in the region, %	Investments per small enterprise on average, thousand rub.
Samara-Tolyatti agglomeration	66995	53 055 058	86.20	791.92
South-Western subregion	1033	1004 365	1.63	972.28
Syzransky subregion	3518	1467 113	2.38	417.03
Otradnensky subregion	1516	1 149 596	1.87	758.31
Neftegorsky subregion	896	993 871	1.61	1109.23
Pokhvistnevsky subregion	1119	457 225	0.74	408.60
Sergievsky subregion	1520	1 336 281	2.17	879.13
Southern subregion	1136	2 082 678	3.38	1833.34

Calculated according to: Investments in fixed assets in terms of new fixed assets, as well as those acquired by import in 2020 by type of set: small enterprises (including microenterprises) (legal entities); Availability of investments in fixed assets in individual entrepreneurs in 2020: individual entrepreneurs (small, including micro). Results of the continuous monitoring of small and midsize business for 2020. Available at: <https://63.rosstat.gov.ru/folder/148376> (accessed: April 15, 2024).

⁶ Results of the continuous statistical monitoring of small and midsize business for 2020. Available at: <https://63.rosstat.gov.ru/folder/148376> (accessed: April 15, 2024).

Spatial differentiation of small enterprises of the Samara Region (individual entrepreneurs and legal entities) by share of investments in 2020



Calculated according to: Investments in fixed assets in terms of new fixed assets, as well as those acquired by import in 2020 by type of set: small enterprises (including microenterprises) (legal entities); Availability of investments in fixed assets in individual entrepreneurs in 2020: individual entrepreneurs (small, including micro). Results of the continuous monitoring of small and midsize business for 2020. Available at: <https://63.rosstat.gov.ru/folder/148376> (accessed: April 15, 2024).

tools for effective management of spatial economic development at the sub-regional level. By this concept, we mean a system of targeted influence on the actors of the regional economy at the sub-regional level, which makes it possible to achieve effective socio-economic development by implementing spatial potential through strengthening inter-municipal ties and improving spatial and territorial location.

However, in Russia, only federal, regional, and municipal levels of public authority are legally distinguished. Nevertheless, analyzing the possible structuring of the economic space, the macro-regional and sub-regional levels mentioned in the strategic documents were previously identified, which currently do not correspond to the governing bodies (Bessonov, Koroleva, 2023, p. 25). There are also alternative points of view that offer greater

variability in the choice of economic space units (Structuring ..., 2016). In the system of strategic documents, the macro-regional and sub-regional levels are also mostly indicated by a dotted line (as a rule, as part of a regional or federal strategic document).

According to some authors, it is relevant to study approaches to the strategic regulation of spatial development using the example of agglomeration, as well as to review how relevant opportunities are reflected in the system of regulatory documents. Thus, N.K. Saveleva and co-authors consider consolidation and elaboration of the status and regulation of the functioning of agglomerations, as well as management and consolidation of powers (Saveleva et al., 2023). The researchers identify only a few Russian agglomerations (these include the Samara-Tolyatti, Saratov and Chelyabinsk agglomerations), for which the redistribution of powers of the regional and municipal levels of government is fixed, and the status of the

agglomeration is determined. In most cases, the creation and functioning of an agglomeration is reflected in a regional socio-economic development strategy (*Tab. 3*); however, in some cases, a regional law, concept or strategy for the development of an agglomeration acts as a regulatory document. Thus, strategizing is one of the main methods of managing an economic space (using the example of agglomeration).

The development of the subregions has been described in a smaller list of strategic documents (*Tab. 4*). Their analysis gives an idea of the declared and applied approaches to subregions management.

At the regional level of the Samara Region, the following management approaches to the subregions are proposed: infrastructure development (telecommunications, road transport network, social infrastructure); integrated approach to environmental protection and waste recycling; implementation of the tourist and recreational potential of localities; improvement of the settlement system: promoting

Table 3. Legal acts and other territorial development planning documents regulating the status of agglomerations in various constituent entities of the Russian Federation

Document regulating the creation and functioning of an agglomeration	Agglomeration
Law of RF constituent entity	Belgorod, Tomsk, Kemerovo, Rostov
Strategy for socio-economic development of the region	Chelyabinsk, Udmurt, Omsk, Krasnodar, Krasnoyarsk, Khanty-Mansiysk, Ulyanovsk, Novosibirsk
Agglomeration development strategy	Izhevsk
Agglomeration development concept	Tomsk, Surgut, Krasnoyarsk, Irkutsk, Nizhnevartovsk, Samara-Tolyatti
Source: (Saveleva et al, 2023).	

Table 4. Legal acts and other territorial development planning documents regulating the status of subregions in various constituent entities of the Russian Federation

Document regulating the creation and functioning of a subregion	Region	Defining principle
Strategy for socio-economic development of the region	Samara Region	Division of the entire territory of the region into seven subregions and the Samara-Tolyatti agglomeration, partially overlapping their territory
	Republic of Bashkortostan	Allocation of two subregions and two agglomerations on the territory of the republic – Ufa and South Bashkir; part of the territory is not classified
	Krasnodar Territory	Representation of the region's territory as a set of seven administrative okrugs, including the Krasnodar and Sochi agglomerations
Law of RF constituent entity	Sverdlovsk Region	Division of the entire territory of the region into five administrative okrugs
Source: own elaboration.		

job creation and increasing budget provision in sparsely populated areas of the region; attracting investments for formed projects. In the Republic of Bashkortostan, it is proposed, within the framework of strategic inter-municipal cooperation, to develop and implement comprehensive targeted programs relevant to each municipality of the subregion.

Formalizing the acquired knowledge makes it possible to formulate the following conclusions.

First, the division into natural (formed as clusters) and artificial (formed within the framework of managerial authority) subregions on the territory of Bashkortostan makes it possible to speak about their corresponding to the administrative okrugs (Sverdlovsk Region) and economic okrugs (Krasnodar Territory) allocated at the sub-regional level.

Second, agglomerations are included in the subregion (administrative, economic okrug) in whole or in part (as in the Samara Region), despite the differences in their socio-economic essence.

Third, there are no claims for administrative-territorial allocation through municipal reform, in contrast, for example, to the experience of Ukraine, which significantly enlarged the intraregional administrative-territorial division based on the unification of municipal districts during the reform in 2020.

Fourth, the presence of administrative bodies in some cases (Sverdlovsk Region): for example, the management body of an administrative okrug appears as a territorial intersectoral executive

authority under the leadership of a manager acting on the principles of unity of command.

Taking into account the above, let us present the main spatial directions for regulating the development of the small business sector, defined in the documents of the Samara Region (Tab. 5).

The urgent tasks include combating unemployment and alleviating social tension by creating new jobs; diversification of the economy, in single-industry cities as well; development of public-private partnership mechanisms; cooperation between small and large enterprises; and increasing tax revenues.

The Strategy for Socio-Economic Development of the Samara Region until 2030 highlights the sectoral and cluster directions. The document reflects the idea of geographically differentiated stimulation of priority types of entrepreneurship at the municipal level, which is provided for in the “Improving the effectiveness of interaction with local governments” section. Promoting the cooperation between small and large businesses has been approved as a priority area. At the same time, it is emphasized that a system of support for the development of small and midsize businesses has already been formed in the region, and further fine-tuning is required: it is necessary to introduce new tools and to improve existing ones, including for the formation of the spatial aspect of management.

Only certain municipal strategies for socio-economic development of the Samara Region mention the spatial development of small

Table 5. Directions and content of spatial development regulation for small enterprises of the Samara Region in regional documents

Document	Regulation direction	Content
Strategy for Socio-Economic Development of the Samara Region	Sectoral	Promoting the development of priority activities in individual municipalities
	Cluster	Implementing the spatial potential of small enterprises, interaction with large enterprises, cross-border cooperation
Strategy for Socio-Economic Development of Municipalities of the Samara Region	Project	Investment projects
	Infrastructure	Creating technology parks, business incubators and other infrastructure elements
Source: own elaboration.		

enterprises. We have identified a project area that provides for the implementation of investment projects with specific localization, and an infrastructure area that reinforces the need to create an infrastructure for spatial development, technology parks and business incubators, as well as promote cluster cooperation.

We consider it logical to highlight regional experience of a differentiated approach to municipal development based on the foresight method (Koroleva, Evdokimov, 2012). The methodology for designing socio-economic strategies implemented in the region includes field foresight sessions in which scientists, together with stakeholders from the local community (district leaders, entrepreneurs, local residents and other interested parties), determine promising areas of socio-economic development. Based on this approach, an appendix was developed that includes a scenario for unlocking the spatial potential of small enterprises by designing missions and goals for the development of small enterprises in the subregion (Bessonov, Koroleva, 2024). One of the stages is to take into account local competitive advantages and traditions (including those associated with the need to promote the uniqueness, identity and traditions of the local territory), which, together with the rejection of directive planning of specialization “from above”, is consistent with the principles of “smart specialization” – the paradigm of innovative development of the European Union (Ranga, 2018).

To improve the system of spatial management of the regional development of the small enterprises sector based on the analysis of documents and taking into account the regional experience of differentiated development of small enterprises at the municipal level, we put forward the following provisions. Due to the fact that there is currently virtually no sub-regional management system for territorial development in the Samara Region, it is also advisable to use benchmarking – the

application of best practices coupled with a logical substantiation of application possibilities.

1. Endowing the existing sub-regional structure of the region (7 subregions and the Samara-Tolyatti agglomeration) with administrative powers to manage regional development. Distributing the powers between regional and municipal authorities to manage agglomeration and sub-regional development.

Creating administrations with coordination and control functions over the leadership of municipalities, under the leadership of a chairperson, who is part of the Samara Region Government. Highlighting the development of small enterprises as a separate area of activity.

2. Ensuring the development of a single regional economic space (institutional support, infrastructure, access to resources), taking into account the significant heterogeneity in the spatial development of small enterprises in the region (contrasting the Samara-Tolyatti agglomeration with the rest of the Samara Region).

3. Implementing a coordinated policy for the development of small enterprises at the sub-regional level. Consolidating municipal public business organizations to the sub-regional level. Designing a mission, goals and promising specializations based on the foresight method, taking into account the opinions of the local population, entrepreneurs, and representatives of the administration. Promoting the implementation of the spatial potential of small enterprises based on inter-municipal cooperation and the “smart specialization” of the subregion.

The above conclusions can be included in the documents of the strategic planning system at the federal and regional levels: in the emerging new Spatial Development Strategy of the Russian Federation, regional strategies for socio-economic development; they can also be included in regional laws on improving the administrative and territorial structure.

Discussion

The research revealed a number of trends and patterns. However, we acknowledge that the work has its limitations, which should be taken into account when interpreting the results obtained and formulating practical recommendations. One of them is the relatively small amount of factual data on the sector of small enterprises in the region (Samara Region), their structure and dynamics. This makes it difficult to form a comprehensive understanding of the role of this economic segment in spatial development and limits the possibilities for deeper analysis. In addition, insufficient attention has been paid to the analysis of strategic documents in the regions, which does not allow us to draw unambiguous conclusions about the management structure of sub-regional development and assess the effectiveness of existing regional policy instruments. To overcome these limitations, further research needs to expand the analyzed database so as to include more detailed information on the activities of small enterprises in various economic sectors, as well as deepen the analysis of regional strategies, paying attention to the mechanisms of their implementation and performance assessment.

An important methodological limitation consists in the insufficient assessment of the role of large and midsize businesses in the structural development of the region. As many researchers rightly point out (Sapozhnikova, 2017; Malyshev, 2020), the structural development of a region is determined not so much by small business as by large and midsize enterprises, which in many ways determine the volume and structure of small businesses. Therefore, a more complete and objective analysis requires taking into account the interrelationships and interdependencies between different sectors of the region's economy, as well as analyzing their cumulative impact on spatial development. Ignoring this aspect can lead to distortion of the real picture and incorrect conclusions.

A significant drawback of the study is the lack of a methodologically substantiated transition from assessments of the unevenness of spatial development to assessments of the potential for territorial development. Simply stating the fact of unevenness is not enough to design an effective strategy for sub-regional development. It is necessary to work out and propose an approach to assessing the development potential of various territories, taking into account their resource potential, geographical location, infrastructural security and other factors. An approach combining SWOT analysis methods and geoinformation systems for visualization and analysis of spatial data can be used as a promising direction.

Finally, proposals to create structures responsible for sub-regional development under the region's government bodies require more specific study and substantiation. It is necessary to clearly show how these structures will differ from the numerous existing coordination and sectoral structures, what prevents the creation of such structures today, and what specific content their activities should be filled with. It is necessary to rely on best practices of regional management and take into account the specifics of a particular region and its institutional environment.

Thus, further research should be directed toward overcoming these limitations and improving the methodological framework. Special attention should be paid to expanding the evidence base, taking into account the role of large and medium businesses, developing methods for assessing the potential for territorial development and specifying proposals for improving the management system for sub-regional development. This will allow obtaining more reliable results and formulate more effective recommendations for regional policy.

Conclusion

Studying the essence and features of the development of the regional economic space allows substantiating possible management tools. Despite

the existing variety of approaches, it is possible to consider economic space in a practice-oriented manner as a heterogeneous, but at the same time unified economic environment with a common specialization and functioning on the basis of inter-municipal cooperation, influencing the socio-economic development of the entire region and being influenced by it as well.

The strategic documents define agglomerations and subregions formed by inter-municipal cooperation of various levels of intensity as the main units of the economic space. The analysis of sub-regional development using the example of the small business sector, the part of the economy that responds most quickly to changes in market conditions, confirms the internal heterogeneity and the potential for further implementation by changing the spatial and territorial configuration and strengthening inter-municipal cooperation. The scientific novelty of the research lies in designing a new methodological approach for managing the spatial development of small business in the region. This approach helps to identify priority areas of development on the ground and create more effective state support tools. The results of the study, namely the proposed directions for improving socio-

economic policy, are of practical importance and can be used to design strategies and development programs both at the regional and national levels, increasing the effectiveness of regional development management.

Due to the lack of a well-established sub-regional management level, practical recommendations for managing the economic space at the sub-regional level are based on best practices that are fragmentary in individual regions. We consider the phrases “administrative okrug” and “economic okrug” to be synonymous. In our opinion, full intraregional division into subregions and agglomerations is advisable, while legislative consolidation of administrative functions is required for the relevant governing body, which has at least coordinating and controlling functions. The formed management framework will make it possible to specify measures and methods of development in the process of “fine-tuning” the regional management system, focusing them on specific municipalities and subregions. At the same time, it is advisable to rely on extensive regional experience, such as the use of the method of regional foresight and “smart specialization” of the subregion.

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Information about the Authors

Eugeny M. Buchwald – Doctor of Sciences (Economics), Professor, Institute of Economics of the Russian Academy of Sciences (32, Nakhimovsky Avenue, Moscow, 117218, Russian Federation; e-mail: buchvald@mail.ru)

Igor S. Bessonov – Candidate of Sciences (Economics), Associate Professor, Samara State University of Economics (141, Sovetskoy Armii Street, Samara, 443090, Russian Federation; e-mail: igornews@rambler.ru)

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