Social marginalization in regions of Siberia and Far East of Russia: Factors, Features, Trends

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Abstract. The social marginalization is one of the most acute problems of modern Russia as it results in its development slowdown and a loss in its social and human capital. The marginalization is particularly wide-spread in the regions of the Asian part of the country. The marginalization is characterized by a complex of problems including the social diseases, the spread of crimes in various forms, the economic and social benefits deprivation, etc. Due to the impoverishment of the human capital, the progress is slow in the Siberian and Far Eastern regions, and this threatens the sustainable economic development here. In this paper, the authors propose a system of indicators and a methodology enabling a comprehensive assessment of the social marginalization. An attempt is made in the paper to link some statistical indicators of the social deprivation with the most striking characteristics of the marginalization in the society. Also, in the paper, the heterogeneity and the regional specificity of this phenomenon are shown. The main factors of geographic, economic, cultural and institutional origin making their impact on the level of marginalization have also been identified.

1. Introduction
The history of the assessment attempts of the society development and the degree of its marginalization (which can be considered to be the antipode of the development of social and human capital) goes far into the past. Back in the ancient times, Aristotle said that such human qualities as morality, thirst for knowledge and righteousness are an integral part of the social wealth [1]. In subsequent epochs, the human abilities and the social capital were among the issues deserved some attention of such leading economists and sociologists as A Smith, D Ricardo, E Burke and K Marx. Later on, this issue was widely studied by representatives of the Chicago School of Sociology including R Park, E Burgess, etc.

The modern approaches to studying of the human capital quality were developed in the papers by A Sen, S Anand, Y Kirdar, R Inglehart, etc. [2, 3]. Within the framework of the UN Development Program (UNDP), A Sen and S Anand developed the human development index (hereinafter referred to as HDI), which serves now as the most popular form of the level assessment of social development or under-development of countries and regions. Comprehensively, this index assesses the economic and social efficiency of countries and regions as well as the quality of life of their populations. HDI is calculated as the arithmetic average of three equipotent indicators:
1. GDP (gross domestic product) divided by PPP (purchasing power parity) per capita; (i.e. this is the income level indicator);
2. a proportion of literates and a proportion of students of any educational institutions (i.e. this is the education level indicator);
3. life expectancy (LE) (i.e. this is the longevity level indicator).

As another assessment method of the society development level, the social progress index can be considered [4]. This index measures the social progress in various countries using the NUTS 2 level as a reference level (NUTS 2 characterizes the social progress in European regions). Twelve components are used here and then, after measuring, they are combined into three broader measurement categories describing more general aspects of the social progress.

As another interesting example of an index of the social quality of life, the Better Life Index can be considered. It was developed in 2011 by OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) [5]. The Better Life Index takes into account the characteristics making a personal life more comfortable including as follows: housing conditions and expenses (for example, real estate prices); household income and financial condition; working conditions (earnings, job security and unemployment); quality of social support; health; education; environment; civilian engagement; level of happiness; security (number of murders and assaults); and work-life balance.

It is worth noting that the social capital is important for future development because the accumulated social capital of the present generation makes fundament of the human capital of the next generation [6].

In addition, in the international practice, there are many approaches for assessment of these or those components of the marginalization, in particular, the level of crime, the spread of social diseases, the quality of life, etc.

2. Models and Methods

The authors propose to measure the quality of life in the Siberian and Far Eastern regions by the level assessment of their societies’ marginalization, i.e., in fact, by the level assessment of the “anti-quality” of life based on several selected indicators. In order not to take a huge number of various indicators into account, there were identified and used some selected strong-marking indicators enabling to assess the scale of a social tension in a society most accurately.

It is proposed to assess the marginalization of regional societies based on 3 groups of indicators (Figure 1):
1. social diseases + deviant behaviour;
2. unnatural mortality;
3. general social-economic situation.

![Figure 1](image-url)

**Figure 1.** Indicators for level assessment of social marginalization. Source: [7].
3. Results and Discussion

Traditionally, for the regions of Siberia and the Far East, the social diseases increased incidence is typical. Among other Russian regions, they are the most affected with HIV infection. These territories accommodate a part of the so-called Siberian drug trafficking hub [8]. In Novosibirsk, Tomsk and Krasnoyarsk regions, the number of HIV cases exceeds 1% of the population; in Kemerovo and Irkutsk oblasts – 1.5%. In the regions with a high proportion of the drug addiction, in addition to the HIV infection, there is an increased crime rate. Meanwhile, as the international practice shows, the drug trafficking itself is one of the main incentives for the high crime level [9]. Also, against the background of the rest of the country, the regions of the East are distinguished by the population’s weakened immunity to the tuberculosis (due to the unfavourable natural and climatic conditions, the wide-spread poverty, the difficult living conditions of the population in some territories, as well as the prevalence of penitentiary institutions).

Tuva, the Republics of Altai and Buryatia, the Trans-Baikal Territory, and the Amur Region have the highest rates of child criminality in the country. Also, it is noted that the culture of street gangs is preserved here, as well as an active formation of criminal subcultures. In the Siberian regions, the juvenile delinquency is stimulated by the spread of federal penitentiary institutions, the high unemployment, the poverty, and the lack of leisure facilities for young people (sports and cultural centres). Child neglect is a separate problem here. The high proportion of illegitimate children, whose upbringing falls on the single mothers’ shoulders, contributes much to the teenagers’ “pushing out” into the arms of the criminal environment [10].

The considerable distance of Siberia and Far East from the centre of the country, the harsh climatic conditions, the poverty of the population, the more and more tense infrastructure problems, the undeveloped urban environment and the spread of alcoholism lead to the social tension, to the presence of a significant gap between the rich and poor strata of the society and to its lumpenization and marginalization. This is manifested in a significant proportion of serious forms of crime and, above all, of murders. Also, the low level of culture of the broad strata of the society is reflected on the roads. In the Asian regions of Russia, the highest death rate in the country is observed as a result of the road accidents (on average, this rate is 25% higher than the national average). Also, the regions of Siberia and Far East are characterized by high mortality rates as a result of the alcohol poisoning and the suicide. Essentially, the alcoholism is a social disease affecting preferably the most employable segments of the population. According to the statistics, most often, the death rate from alcohol or suicide is typical for adult men in age of 30-40 years. As a rule, this becomes a consequence of professional and/or family troubles. In addition to the moral and ethical problems associated with the spread of drunkenness, the alcoholism leads to huge economic losses; after all, because of the alcoholism, a large number of the economically active population found itself outside of the production process.

It is the alcoholism that is the main social disaster, which causes and strengthens the suicidal tendencies of the Russian population living in the Siberian and Far-Eastern regions. The determined by WHO (World Health Organization) “critical level of the suicides frequency” indicating the need for emergency state measures is equal to 20 cases per 100 thousand people [11]. In 2019, this milestone was crossed by 10 of 24 regions considered in this article. Among them there are both national republics (Buryatia, Altai, Yakutia) and the regions populated mainly by Russians (Kemerovo, Amur regions).

The infant mortality rate in the Asian regions of Russia is rather low as compared to the national average. Slightly increased indicators of the infant mortality remain in the Republics of Tyva and Altai, the Jewish Autonomous Oblast and Chukotka.

Judging on the level of poverty, this macro-region is highly differentiated. Here are located both the most prosperous regions in this part of the country (Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug and Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug) and some of the poorest regions in the country, including the Republics of Tyva, Altai, Buryatia, the Jewish Autonomous Oblast and the Altai Republic, where the income of the average family is barely enough to meet the basic physiological needs.
As a rule, the following social groups are most vulnerable to the poverty: the unemployed, the pensioners and the large families. From the point of view of the society’s marginalization, the latter population group is of the greatest concern. More than a quarter of children in Russia lives below the poverty line [12]. Upon that, it is precisely children’s poverty that causes the so called “poverty trap”: a child gets into it because he/she grows up in social deprivation and is deprived of the opportunity to receive full-fledged services of education, culture, medicine, etc. [13].

In addition, in the post-Soviet period, traditionally, the regions of the Asian part of the country (except for the oil and gas territories) are characterized by a steady migration outflow. The said migration outflow is absent only in large agglomerated regions (such as Novosibirsk Oblast and Krasnoyarsk Krai), in the Tyumen Oblast (including its national autonomous areas) attractive for work and in the Tomsk Oblast attractive for studying. The lower values of the migration outflow are observed in the national republics (Tyva, Yakutia, Buryatia, etc.).

Thus, the integral picture of the social marginalization in the regions of the Asian part of the country differs significantly; but in general, the situation here is much worse than in the subjects of the Federation located in the European part of the country (Figure 2).

The marginalization level was assessed on the scale from 0 to 1, where 0 was used for the absolute absence of the marginalization signs and 1 for almost irreparable society erosion with the social problems. According to this scale, the marginalization degree in the regions of Siberia and the Far East varies from 0.381 in the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug to 0.737 in the Jewish Autonomous Oblast. Upon that, the last 8 Asian regions in the rating list are among the 10 most marginalized ones in the country. The Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug, which is most successful among the Asian regions, occupies only the 17th position among the regions of Russian Federation (it is bypassed by the leading regions including Moscow, St. Petersburg, the republics of the North Caucasus, as well as the regions of the Black Earth region and the South of Russia).

Figure 2. Assessment of marginalization level in regions of Asian part of Russian Federation in 2015-2019. Source: authors’ compilation.
4. Conclusion

The geography of the marginalization and its main components identified in the article has some specific features associated with various both exogenous and endogenous factors. Depending on the origin, all the factors can be divided into geographical, economic or cultural-institutional ones.

The most striking geographical factor determining the region's marginalization is its location in the systems "west-east" and "north-south". As a rule, the eastern regions are more marginalized than the western ones, and the northern regions are more problematic than the southern ones. Further, in these two planes, the impact is visible of the factors of natural and climatic conditions and the age of development/utilization. Another important factor is cultural and religious differences. For example, Muslim peoples are less marginalized due to the believers' commitment to their culture and traditional values (full families, strict prohibitions on suicide as well as the non-proliferation of alcoholism or drug addiction, etc.) On the contrary, other peoples, especially the small peoples of the North of Siberia, are strongly exposed to alcohol at the genetic level, which contributes to the rapid degradation of their societies.

One more important economic factor is the social-economic situation. The population’s increased poverty, high unemployment and economic deprivation contributes to the growth of the social exclusion of people. Most often, the regions with low real incomes of the population, high unemployment or with a significant stratification in society are among the most problematic ones.

The level of urbanization is another significant factor in the marginalization of regions. The immature urban centres, especially young “socialist factories-based towns” with their undeveloped public infrastructure create favourable conditions for criminality. Here, between people, “weak ties” prevail; and there is a tendency for people to participate in rather short lasted, functionally defined and limited contacts [14]. In this regard, the low level of public spaces development becomes a significant factor of the marginalization. Often, in order to prevent many crimes, it is enough to create a safe urban environment; this concept can include a street lighting, surveillance cameras, a development of various activities able to increase an attendance of sparsely populated places, etc.

An equally important factor is the level of public functions development. What is meant here is conditions creation for citizens' leisure. The presence of children's and youth sections, cultural centres, equipped recreation parks, cinemas, museums, theatres, etc., provides population with opportunities for an interesting life rich with events. This is important, first of all, for the most psychologically unstable and full of energy population’s categories, i.e. for children and adolescents. The appearance of chances of self-realization in the sports sections or creative circles within a walking distance reduces significantly an attractiveness of the deviant asocial behaviour.

The geographical factors of the marginalization include the proximity to borderlines and to transport arteries. These factors determine a geocriminogenic position of a region. A location of a region on drugs transit routes, the availability of valuable resources for export (forest/timber, fish, gold, etc.), proximity to the boundaries (making favourable conditions for smuggling) contribute to the increased crime rates and the development of the shadow sector of economy in the territories of the Asian part of the country [15].

All these factors have much in common with each other, and some of them are in the most direct relationship with others. On the other hand, it would be wrong not to take into account some features of statistics collecting in certain regions. For example, also the factor of neighbourhood and interaction with other regions plays a certain role. A significant part of crimes and encroachments are committed by citizens from other regions and states. Consequently, the factor of residence of large immigrant diasporas in the region plays a weighty role in its criminogenic situation.

Also, the law enforcement structures effectiveness has a heavy impact on the society marginalization. The better the policemen cope with their work, the less likely is a crime commitment and the better the safety of life is. However still, there are many questions to the reliability of the statistics of the law enforcement system work in Russia. So, it is too early to rely on it in full.
All the listed factors are closely intertwined in the life of our society. Mainly these factors form the society’s reacting style to many social-economic and political challenges. They differ with their times of transformation: some of them stay almost unchanged for decades (religious traditions); but some, on the contrary, can be transformed in a few years (the development of public spaces).

In general, the method of marginalization level determining presented in the article turned to be able to reflect accurately the well-known features of the Siberian-Far-Eastern regions and made it possible to link the quantitative statistical indicators with the qualitative interpretation of the results obtained on their basis. All this allows us to speak about the satisfied effectiveness of this methodology and the possibility of its further application for this kind of analysis.

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