

NININS 2020**International Scientific Forum «National Interest, National Identity and National Security»****REGIONAL STUDIES SCHOOLS IN GLOBAL SCIENCE
THROUGH THE PRISM OF TRANSDISCIPLINARY
REGIONOLOGY**

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Abstract

The authors of the paper suggest considering the role of national (state/regional) Regional Studies schools in the development of global science through the structure of Transdisciplinary Regionology, a study about regions, which forms general theoretic and practical approaches to the study of them and theoretical-methodological basis of studying the processes of regional development in the regions – objects of study. The authors see the structure of Transdisciplinary Regionology through several approaches. The first approach deals with the balance of theory and practice and divides Regional Studies into three levels: factual, analytical and theoretical. The second approach deals with the regional specifics of schools and defines lines of research formed in different countries and regions. The third approach deals with the role and place of subdisciplines in the structure of Transdisciplinary Regionology and seeks to distinguish sections that focus on particular aspects of life in the region and border other disciplines (Political Science, Theory of International Relations, Sociology, Culture Studies etc.), and those that function in the paradigms chosen by the researcher (gender paradigm, globalization paradigm etc.). An important role in the proposed matrix belongs to theory of Transdisciplinary Regionology, which aims to systemize conceptual framework and methodological base of Regional Studies as well as become the key factor contributing to the strengthening of the global role of national (state/regional) Regional Studies schools.

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1. Introduction

Modern Regional Studies come in two interrelated dimensions. Firstly, they can be conducted in the frameworks of the disciplines that focus on the regional peculiarities of the object of study. Among these disciplines are Sociology of Regions, Regional Political Science, World Geography, Regional History, Regional Linguistics, Theory of International Relations, Global Studies etc. Secondly, there is quite a significant set of studies in which region is the object of study (while the subject of the study can be its numerous peculiarities, processes etc.). The first type of studies is interdisciplinary studies at the intersection of Regional Studies and one or more other disciplines, and they partly borrow the object of Regionology to solve their own tasks. The second type focuses on the object of study – the region, and, while borrowing methods of research from other disciplines if necessary, relates directly to Transdisciplinary Regionology, which is a discipline on the phenomenon of a region that synthesizes theoretical and practical knowledge about it drawn from various kinds of research. In the given, combined and output knowledge about a region the approaches and methods of different scientific disciplines (this reflects its transdisciplinary character) are used for research not only aimed to collect data on the region (Regional Studies in the classical sense by analogy with Local Area Studies and Country Studies) but also aimed at the analysis of regional processes and the forecast of the consequences of these processes. This reflects the scientific character of Regionology because in the Russian language the part “логия” (“logy”) – in the names of sciences such as “сейсмология” (seismology), “паразитология” (parasitology), “нутрициология” (nutritionology) etc. – is related to the type of knowledge which allows drawing deductive conclusions on the basis of the given data and the logical structure of the knowledge. (Rozhdestvenskiy, 1996). An important component of Transdisciplinary Regionology is national (country/regional) schools of Regional Studies.

2. Problem Statement

National (country/regional) schools of Regional Studies develop in accordance with two tendencies. The first tendency is the spread of research lines that position themselves as international. An example is American school by Isard that reached international level through Regional Science Association International (Kuznetsova, 2018), yet another example is Regional Studies Association created in Great Britain – both schools have numerous divisions in different countries. The other tendency is the development of actually national schools of Regional Studies and their partly internationalization through participation in different international projects. Both tendencies produce a great number and variety of subdisciplines, which leads modern research in regions to the necessity of generalization and systematization of the accumulated experience. These functions, in our opinion, can be performed by Transdisciplinary Regionology, which is where the national and the global meet in modern science, allowing for uniting the achievements of national schools into one scientific field.

3. Research Questions

In our article we would like to focus on the role of national (country/regional) schools of Regional Studies in global science in terms of their place in the structure of Transdisciplinary Regionology.

3.1. The balance of theory and practice

We will consider the place of national schools of Regional Studies in terms of the balance of theory and practice.

3.2. Regional specificity

Each school has clear regional peculiarities which influence the choice of the subject of research as well as the goals and tasks set. We will attempt to define the specificity using the cases of concrete schools in Russia, the USA and Japan.

3.3. The role and place of subdisciplines

National schools have a significant influence over the disciplines formed in the framework of Regional Studies. Our task is to examine which subdisciplines are formed and demonstrate their peculiarities in the cases of Russia, the USA and Japan.

4. Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the article is the analysis of the role of national schools of Regional Studies in global science, their place in the general structure of Transdisciplinary Regionology and in the global scientific field.

5. Research Methods

The methods employed in the study are systemic analysis, comparative analysis, terminological analysis and structure analysis.

6. Findings

As for the role of national (country/regional) schools in the structure of Transdisciplinary Regionology, we suggest defining its levels and elements on the basis of several approaches: in terms of the balance of theory and practice, in terms of the regional specificity of schools, and in terms of the role and place of subdisciplines in its structure.

The first approach – *the balance of theory and practice* – is determined by the fact that regional knowledge is extremely inhomogeneous with regard to its theoretical and practical components. This approach can be subdivided into the following levels: factual, analytical and theoretical.

At the first, factual, level data on the region is collected. This kind of research is practically oriented, and the goal of the research is the development of systemized knowledge about the territory

studied and its main peculiarities: historic, economic and geographic, social-political, linguistic etc. This work can be done at the international (when countries and larger regions study each other) as well as local level (studying the peculiarities of parts of the country, their ethnicities, cultures, languages and other peculiarities). A significant number of these works are limited to data collection because this result often turns out to be valuable as such and makes a profound contribution into bilateral study of different countries and regions, the deepening of cultural exchange and, as a result, overcoming problems of intercultural communication. Many countries assign Regional Studies a specific role in interethnic interaction, in particular, Japanese academic community represented by Japanese Academic Council (日本学術会議) and the Committee of Region Studies (地域研究委員会) (Prospects for Area Studies, 2010).

The second, analytic, level implies a transfer from the collection of different data to the analysis of the data with the purpose of the solution of concrete regional problems. A complex transdisciplinary analysis allows defining the factors of uneven development of regions and developing strategies for the improvement of their economic and sociopolitical systems.

The main goals of the third, theoretical level are the development of theoretical basis of study of a region as an object, the development of approaches to defining its universal and unique characteristics, the establishment of the borders of the territory studied, and the methods of study of separate regions, their groups and ways of interaction. The theoretical base of Region Studies, its development and argumentation are currently the most important task in the framework of institutionalization of Regionology as a science. Among foreign schools, the largest contribution in the sphere has been made by American school of Regional Science by Isard with the participation of representatives of Regional Science Association International. In Russia among the most systematic and complex works in the field are the achievements of Voskresenskiy school, which is developing the guidelines of World Complex Regional Studies, considering this discipline a new subject field for international relations studies (Voskresenskiy, 2013).

Another approach to defining the elements of the structure of Transdisciplinary Regionology is *based on the regional specificities of scientific schools*. The above-mentioned elements are research lines that have been formed in different countries and regions. It should be noted that world regions have very differing experiences in this sphere. There are regions where research is in line with worldwide trends and there are those that insist on the necessity of developing their own way. Besides, a detailed study reveals pronounced trends in research lines of regional studies in different countries. In particular, Regional Science (Isard) is primarily aimed at the analysis of social and economic processes in the space studied by the researcher (Isard, 2003). The works of Chinese researchers focus on economic issues (Makeeva, 2019), while Japanese researchers focus on intercultural interaction issues (Shiba, 2016), and a significant number of Russian works focus on the issues of international relations and world politics (Koldunova, 2016).

Finally, *basing on the role and place of subdisciplines* in the structure of Transdisciplinary Regionology one should distinguish the divisions of the discipline that concretize its subject focusing on specific aspects of the region's performance and bordering other disciplines (Political Science, Theory of International Relations, Sociology, Culture Studies etc.) or existing in the framework of a particular

paradigm (gender paradigm, global paradigm etc.¹). This differentiation also has regional specificity. For example, among a number of subdisciplines of Russian region studies some can be defined as leading ones, and the list is not limited to that. One example is Sociocultural Regional Studies (социокультурное регионоведение), which aims to study the priorities and dominants invariable on the territory of the studied region, as well as the “local porosity” of the culture, which creates lacunae not only in the word formation but also in the phenomena and concepts of the culture (Pavlovskiy, 2005; 2012). Political Regionalism Studies (политическая регионалистика) seeks to answer the questions on the nature of political space, its regional stratification, on the limits of sovereignty of territorial-spatial political actors (Dakhin, 2016). World Complex Regional Studies (мировое комплексное регионоведение) focuses on the regularities of the process of forming and functioning of socio-economic and socio-political systems of world regions with the account of historic, demographic, national, religious, cultural-anthropological, ecological, political, legal, natural peculiarities, the place and role in the international labor division and the system (subsystems) of international relations (Voskresenskiy, 2013). The need to define the independent role of Transdisciplinary Regionology appears especially strong when one analyses two of the latter disciplines: Political Regionalism Studies is in the official list of scientific specialties in Russia and relates to Political Science, and World Complex Region Studies develops in the framework of International Relations Studies.

An example of distinguishing subdisciplines depending on the concrete subject of study is Japanese region studies, in which the Committee of Region studies of Japanese Scientific Council suggests to define such divisions as Area Studies (エリア・スタディーズ), Humanitarian Economic Geography (人文・経済地理学), Anthropology (人類学), International Regional Development Studies (国際地域開発学), Regional Informatics (地域情報学) (Prospects for Area Studies, 2010).

Lastly, the synthesis of all the three approaches enables to demonstrate the structure of Transdisciplinary Regionology through the prism of the role and place of regional/country subdisciplines and the balance of theory and practice.

If one locates Russian subdisciplines of Transdisciplinary Regionology in the scheme, at the factual level are, in particular, Local Area Studies and Country Studies as well as Region Studies in the part related to the collection and systematization of data on the region studied. Such a vision of regional studies is quite common. In this use, the term “Regional Studies” (регионоведение) becomes a synonym of, for example, Country Studies (страноведение). This is confirmed by quite famous works, for instance, the book “Regional Studies. China” by the famous specialist in China, Kochergin, is in fact a work on Country Studies – Chinese Studies (Kochergin, 2018).

The analytical and theoretical levels can combine certain subdisciplines that perform both functions as well as Regional Studies understood by some schools as the analysis of the processes taking place in the region, based on the data collected. An ambiguity similar to that the term “регионоведение” has exists in English-speaking works with, for example, the term “Area Studies”. On the one hand, Area Studies include language training, language field work, special attention to local history and local interpretations, on the other hand – search for and argumentation of a holistic approach to the study of a region, multidisciplinary interaction of researchers (Szanton, 2012).

¹For more information, see works of I. N. Barygin about paradigms in Regional Studies (Barygin, 2013).

In the structure described there are lacunae: in particular, the interdisciplinary approach of the majority of schools provides an opportunity to combine the efforts of two or three disciplines, but does not include general theoretical aspects that could fully capture Regionology. To complete the gap, the theory of Transdisciplinary Regionology can be useful, whose main purpose is to thoroughly describe general theoretical approaches to the study of a region, systemize the terms, concepts and research methods. In a general, schematic way the above-said can be presented in the following table (Table 01).

Table 1. The structure of Transdisciplinary Regionology

The role and place of national (country / regional) schools of Transdisciplinary Regionology (cases of Russia, the USA, Japan)		
	Special (at the interface of other disciplines)	General
Theoretical level	Russia: World Complex Regional Studies (мировое комплексное регионоведение),	<i>Theory of transdisciplinary regionology</i>
Analytical level	Political Regionalism Studies (политическая регионалистика), Sociocultural Regional Studies (социокультурное регионоведение)	Russia: Regional Studies as analysis of processes that are taking place in the region (регионоведение), Regionalism studies, Regionalistics (Регионалистика)
	USA: Regional Science, Global Studies	
	Japan: Humanitarian Economic Geography (人文・経済地理学), Anthropology (人類学), International Regional Development Studies (国際地域開発学), Regional Informatics (地域情報学)	USA: Area Studies, Regional Studies. Japan: Area Studies (エリア・スタディーズ)
Factual level	Russia: Local Area Studies (краеведение), Country Studies (страноведение), Regional Studies as collection and systematization of data about the region (регионоведение)	
	USA: Country Studies, Area Studies, Regional Studies	
	Japan: Japan Studies (日本学), Local Area Studies (地元学, 自地域学)	

7. Conclusion

We believe that the theory of Transdisciplinary Regionology (in italics in the table) will become the basic factor that serves to strengthen the global influence of national (country/regional) schools of Regional Studies. The theory is to play the role of a discipline that provides the systematization of conceptual framework and methodological basis as special disciplines at the interface of other sciences can perform this function only partly.

The matrix proposed in the article can be used as a tool of systematization of other subdisciplines of Transdisciplinary Regionology, defined on the basis of different criteria: regional, paradigmatic, interdisciplinary etc. This, in our opinion, will provide a more accurate understanding of the goals and tasks of this discipline, its limits and opportunities, self-determination of a researcher and establishing their work in the structure of the science, which, finally, will stimulate further development of Regional Studies in general. However, national schools of Regional Studies will continue to play an important part in regional research, in particular, in solving the problems of regional development of countries. The

possibility to borrow and adapt this experience for using in other regions remains an important goal of global science in the context of transstructural change of regional experience.

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