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FEATURES OF FORMING THE MANAGEMENT STATUS OF INTER-POPULATION TERRITORIES AND THEIR POPULATION NOT ONLY AS AN OBJECT, BUT ALSO AS A SUBJECT

Abstract: *The article examines social space that more or less clearly falls outside the system of territorial organization of power - inter-settlement territories, which from the point of view of the government observer are "empty" space. The conditions under which these spaces turn out to be not only "empty" for the power observer, but also invisible, are analyzed, since statistical observations are limited to the level of settlements, which are absent here. Thus, in intersettlement areas there is no object of management (population, enterprises, infrastructure), and the maintenance of the management system becomes meaningless. But, at the same time, these territories remain part of the state, and there is a need to manage them. The practices of such remote control are defined in the article as the "periphery of power." The latter is by no means an anarchy, but a special type of power practices, formed at the intersection of formal and informal connections, a special type of mobilization of power and law in these spaces. This article examines management practices in relation to "emptiness", the formation on the periphery of the phenomenon of the population (both formally present and "invisible") acquiring the status of not only an object, but also a subject of management, the formation of self-governing communities and jointness.*

The article analyzes the social processes taking place in a space that, from the point of view of power, turned out to be "empty" and has lost its social dimension as a result of the compression of social space. There is nothing left in it that is of interest to the authorities and power agents capable of representing power in the territory. Such space turns into a territory understood as a purely geographical formation, suitable only for political presentation and development within the framework of certain global projects. To manage such a territory, a special regime is emerging, which we have designated as the "periphery of power." However, the lack of interest of the authorities and formal structures for collecting information in such a territory does not exclude the presence of social processes

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here that occur outside the boundaries of government reflection. Description of the features of social processes and key actors on the periphery of power is the purpose of this article.

During a series of expeditions in the areas of the upper reaches of the river. Lena (2018–2022) it was discovered that a special local order, a partnership, is emerging in this territory, existing next to global projects, but not intersecting with them; he is invisible both to them and to the authorities. For the power of the state, it is only important that in the “emptiness” no other, alternative source of power arises, representing different rules of the game. It is assumed that the presence of large corporations on the territory will make it possible to once again turn it into a social space and revive life here. However, as the study showed, corporations exist in a space that does not overlap with local residents. In order to connect the spaces formed in this locale by authorities at various levels, corporations and the local world, a mediator is needed who could, on the one hand, act in the “emptiness”, that is, not be power, and on the other, be able to mobilize this power. A variant of the appearance and activity of such a mediator, discovered during field research, is described in this work. It seems that he produces that local order that is able to coexist with power, remaining invisible and harmless to it.

Key words: intersettlement territories, social space, “emptiness”, subject of management, periphery of power, social invisibility, social space, spatial compression, “social emptiness”, periphery of power, territory, global law, local order, power, corporations, mediator.

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Introduction

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The development and application of the territoriality regime are one of the most important features of power, at least state power. The state is always connected with the territory, with images of this territory as a certain integrity. Moreover, to organize space, to make different things uniform, is the fundamental task of the state, on the success of which all subsequent management procedures in turn depend. And the more heterogeneous the social landscape of a country appears, the naturally greater efforts the state has to make to streamline it. In this regard, the USSR and its successor the Russian Federation pose a gigantic territorial problem. Composed of extremely heterogeneous material, differing in climate, population density, cultural specifics, and way of life, this space was constantly, at least formally, transformed into a more homogeneous one. More precisely, this was the imperious intention. At the same time, its heterogeneous nature and the impossibility of bringing all territories to a single basis still manifested themselves one way or another. One of these manifestations will be discussed in this article. We will try to describe the features of informal practices, primarily managerial ones, in relation to one of the options for social space that falls outside the general logic of the territorial organization of Russia - the space of intersettlement territories.

Over the past decades, a relatively coherent system of territorial organization has developed in the Russian Federation. The country was divided into federal districts, which included the territories of federal subjects (territories, regions and republics).

This, according to the authors, should strengthen the control of the federal center over the executive power on the territory of the constituent entities of the federation. The latter consist of municipal districts, which in turn include settlements, and they can include several settlements and constitute the lowest level of government, as close as possible to the population. It is clear that the formal legal picture of the territorial organization of the country is not the only possible one. At the intersection of formal (existing in the form of laws and regulations) and informal management practices, a model of “local federation” arises, extended from the level of the federal center and the subject of the federation to the level of the municipality. Here, the operation and management of the territory includes structures that are not formally involved in territorial management, or rather, that do not act as its direct participants. Objects of control arise that have a complex form of connection to the territory and no less complex ways of interacting with the authorities, for example, the otkhodniks already described in the literature. However, the general principles of the organization remain the same.

However, already in the initial version of the law on local self-government, a variant of the territory was mentioned, falling out of the general structure and described by the concept of “inter-settlement (non-included) territory.” Such legal concepts are not at all a unique invention of domestic jurisprudence: in world practice, similar formations take place in Germany, the USA, and some other countries, and there we are talking about territories that, for one reason or another, are not included in the community. As a rule, these are the territories of military units and the settlements that serve them, specially protected

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natural sites, etc. However, in domestic realities we are talking about other spaces. In contrast to the German experience, their constitutive characteristic is not so much natural features or the level of secrecy as the extremely low level of population. Moreover, it is so low that maintaining any management structures in this territory seems simply unprofitable. There are not only few residents here, but there are also no enterprises that may be of interest to the fiscal services, there is nothing that would make sense to supervise. Here there is simply no one and nothing to manage, and therefore the existing management structures turn out to be redundant and are being reduced (optimized). Accordingly, the powers to organize management in this territory are transferred to a higher structure (administration of the municipal district). We have designated this situation by the term “periphery of power.” In essence, we are talking about a space not covered by the settlement structure, about the lower level of organization of territorial administration in the Russian Federation. At each level of state or municipal government we have an enforcer (authority) or his agent who has the ability to mobilize the enforcer, which creates the possibility of management from the federal level to the level of settlements.

Against this background, inter-settlement territories act as a rather specific formation. They, of course, are subject to all formal and legal norms of state legislation, as well as the powers of the district level of local government. But the structures themselves, as such, ensuring the implementation of legislation (enforcers, authorities) are not here: the strongholds of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, supervisory services and even the municipal authorities themselves are located in settlements and regional centers. Here, directly on the territory, there is neither an enforcer nor an agent who could legitimately mobilize it. According to prevailing ideas, these are so-called promising territories, i.e. territories where there may be something, but there is nothing yet: there may be recreational spaces, there may be spaces for creating new settlements, economic facilities, etc., but that’s all this is only assumed in the future. So far, in inter-settlement territories there is only a statistically recorded “absence” and uncertainty, in which some, often indefinite, number of people live somewhere: data on the population of the district and region for this territory varied quite significantly, as did the location of this population. At the same time, inter-settlement territories are the space of the state, which one way or another must be covered by management. This issue becomes especially acute in remote and hard-to-reach areas, characterized not only by low population density, but also by the lack of transport routes. How is governance structured in such “empty” territories? By whom and in relation to whom is it built? We will try to consider these circumstances in this work. The empirical basis of our analysis is the

study of inter-settlement territories in the Irkutsk region (the leader in the number of such territories in Russia according to Rosstat) in 2018 and 2021, where inter-settlement territories were examined at the junction of the Zhigalovsky and Ust-Kutsky districts along the river. Lena. The main method is observation. Additional methods included analysis of government statistics, retrospective informal interviews with former residents of these territories, and conversations with informants living in the territories under study.

However, before moving on to describing the features of management in inter-settlement territories as in “empty” space, it is worth defining what exactly we mean by “empty” space, what exactly is missing here, why this space turns out to be “empty”.

This article is devoted to an attempt to comprehend and describe the forms of local order and the characteristics of the agents who create it in a space that, according to the general belief recorded in official documents, turned out to be “empty” as a result of the compression of the developed, inhabited territory. At best, it is interpreted as a “territory of development”, where there is only a certain mega project that is carried out in the “emptiness” and fills it. Such a space makes the objects it contains indistinguishable to the gaze of government statistics and management. At the same time, this state of affairs is by no means socially exotic. It is found not only in inter-settlement territories, but also in the Arctic, northern and simply remote areas, where the distance between settlements is such that close attention to them from state and municipal administration turns out to be excessively expensive, and the territories themselves, in the eyes of the authorities, acquire a virtual character. Actually, we are not talking about some geographical specifics, but about a special situation, which we designated by the term “inaccessibility.” We do not reduce this concept to the concept of “remoteness”, which is actively being developed in anthropological research, but we understand it as a situation when the costs of control over space for the power structure turn out to be fundamentally higher than the benefits that the government receives from this control. Under these conditions, compression is recorded, the absence of what the authorities (with the help of statistics) can “see”.

Today, the view is becoming increasingly widespread that studies of spatial compression are not particularly relevant in the perspective of sociological and anthropological presentation. The process is clear and described, the consequences are also more or less studied. However, it seems that this is not so, or not entirely so. The study of the processes occurring in the space remaining after compression has significant theoretical and methodological meaning for understanding modern Russian society par excellence. The point, of course, is not that the results of a completely local socio-anthropological analysis are

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supposed to be extended to the entire social space of Russia. At the same time, it is precisely this space remaining after compression that can overcome the “naming paradox,” which complicates and sometimes makes impossible the study of other localities. Social space, in the interpretation carried out in our article, acts as a “text” and ways of reading it by an observer/participant of this space. This “text” is formed, on the one hand, by material artifacts, and on the other, by repeating configurations of social events and agents included in it. The combination of repeating social configurations and their material environment gives rise to the endowment of the artifacts themselves with social meanings, which are “read” by an agent or observer as elements of a “text.” But, having organized itself as such, this space simply obscures reality from the view of the observer. Further research is directed not at reality, but at the “text”.

Under standard research conditions, the objective state of affairs is recognized and comprehended by people in a very specific set of terms. It is not so important that these terms are drawn from the Economix textbook, television programs or the editorials of a popular tabloid. It is important that it is in these terms that people conceptualize themselves, their activities, and the world around them: an agent defines himself and acts as an “entrepreneur,” “official,” “civil activist,” etc. Each of these concepts is associated with a very specific set of practices and ways of explaining oneself and others. The agent attributes very specific meanings to his actions, simply without having a name for others.

In the reality defined by these concepts, the social agent exists.

But the external observer is forced to comprehend what is happening in these terms; he simply has no other option. Even if we assume that the observer creates a certain metalanguage for describing reality, allowing one to escape the logic of confrontation, its relevance will not be obvious to the social agent. If this language is translated into the language of everyday self-description, then it is redundant for the agent (“I have already named it”); if it is not translated into this language, then it is simply incorrect (“this does not exist in my reality”), thereby making the research completely impossible. It fits into the logic of the formed discourse, becoming not a research act, but a political (social, ethical, aesthetic, etc.) act; accordingly, it itself must be researched. In this form, it does not reduce, but increases the mass to be analyzed, or is simply rejected as hostile. A strictly defined object, social reality, turns out to be “bewitched”, not amenable to reflection and rejecting it. “Disenchanting” the object of study (society), breaking through the dominant discourse in these conditions is the most important task. The study of what happens in space after compression allows, in our opinion, to do this. From the point of view of the powerful observer, the bearer of the dominant

discourse, there is nothing found in it that could be “read” as the filling of this space. It is in this sense that we talk about “emptiness”. Empty space turns into territory - a certain extent, devoid of readable social and economic content. Social meanings do not disappear completely, but their volume is reduced so much that the territory falls out of the usual forms of understanding social space.

The process of compression itself, reflected in the dramatic visuality of abandoned villages, gives rise to a transitional (liminal) space where focal settlement and a minimum number of permanent residents remain. But in the dominant discourse, such liminality is by definition temporary and attributes the almost inevitable transformation of space into territory. It is no coincidence that the term “territory” is used in statistical and normative descriptions of “empty space” (“inter-settlement territories”), and is also actively present in government and corporate vocabulary (“to go to the territory”, “to work on the territory”). Such dehumanization (or more precisely, desocialization) of space takes work with it beyond the scope of social interactions, making local residents and communities conditionally “invisible” or, at least, insignificant. Territory is a kind of locality in the view of Zygmunt Bauman, stigmatized and pushed to the periphery of life by global processes: ““Locality” in a globalized world is a sign of social deprivation and degradation. The inconvenience of “localized” existence is enhanced by the fact that in conditions when public spaces have moved far beyond the framework of “local” life, the concept of “locality” loses its meaning-forming potential, becoming increasingly dependent on guiding and explanatory actions that are at the local level uncontrollable.”

The territory, which has lost most of its social meanings, has a serious specificity regarding the developed and meaningful space, which is rapidly turning into a space of discourse of total confrontation. Firstly, it exists, has an official status, is included in land cadastres, the system of territorial administration, that is, this territory undoubtedly exists, at least on maps and in documents. Secondly, it is distinguished by the recognized status of the other, the “empty”; has geographical and political meaning, but lacks social meaning; “empty” social space has no usual names. Accordingly, it can be called, comprehended, and carried out as a research, rather than a political or ideological act.

Externally, the processes and territories described below are similar to the situation in remote, isolated villages of the Russian North. But there is a significant difference, specific specifically to the East of Russia and partly the Arctic territories. In the first case, we are talking about the advantages and disadvantages of the isolated existence of a completely living local society. In our study, both the former society itself and the former structure of social space are destroyed. This is not about how an isolated

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society survives, but about how new models of sociality emerge that produce modern forms of social space, how the process of (re)development of space occurs, how actors emerge who again endow the territory with social meanings that connect the disintegrated parts into some semblance of unity, and restoring social space.

At the same time, an important condition for the existence and activity of these actors is that they remain “invisible” for the dominant discourse, like all the inhabitants of the “emptiness”. These actors are designated by us by the term “mediators” - intermediaries between the elements that remain in the “emptiness”, between the “empty” and the “filled”. Their activity transforms the “emptiness” into a frontier between dense, specified space and unnamed space. These mediators will be discussed.

As will be shown below, through the work of mediators, new forms of social interaction arise in a rarefied space, which can later spread to other, more populated areas. This experience already took place in Russia in the 1980s – 1990s, when marginal economic practices of the Soviet period (“tsehoviki”, “loan sharks”, etc.) began to drift into the social center and became dominant. Particularly important for our purposes is the fact that people in a “shrunked” space do not strive for publicity and do not present themselves. Accordingly, they themselves, their reality, turn out to be much less tied to discourse and allow much greater freedom in both understanding and interpretation. However, before moving on to analysis and hypotheses, it is necessary to describe the object itself as it appeared during the expeditions of 2018–2022.

Main part

So, what gives us reason to identify inter-settlement territories and “empty” social space? Three circumstances can be distinguished here. The first is the process of spatial compression, which has been repeatedly described in the specialized literature. The population of Russia is actively migrating from small villages to larger and economically developed settlements, regional centers, and flows into megacities. This is especially noticeable in the eastern regions of the country, where for many years there has been an outflow of population as part of the “western drift”. Urbanization in the region (with all the differences in individual cases) is largely associated with a radical change in the spatial aspects of development caused by the transition to market economic models and a sharp reduction in state participation in the social sphere. This leads to a radical narrowing of social infrastructure to large cities and increasing inequality in the quality of life between the center of the region and the province. From this perspective, urbanization in the region relies heavily on the flow of people from the provinces seeking a shrinking package of social services and

educational opportunities for children. These “modern refugees,” despite the stigmatizing image of representatives of tradition and backwardness, try to integrate into city life, using all possible forms of assets and connections.

The areas of origin are gradually losing population, production is curtailing, and social infrastructure is degrading. At some stage, this space for power turns out to be unclaimed; the costs of maintaining the government infrastructure turn out to be higher than the income received, and it is at this moment that inter-settlement territories arise. In other words, these territories are currently simply not of interest to the authorities and cannot be effectively controlled. Then, perhaps, the situation will change, which is why they become the subject of “planning for the future,” but for now they are simply set aside. True, there are reasons that make the occurrence of such a future unlikely.

The second circumstance is related to what A.F. noted. Filippov’s perception of social space by any observer as a text with a specific mechanism for “reading social space”. The concept of “social space” has long been in relative oblivion. It was assumed that social action occurs in time, and space is nothing more than a container for bodies. Even where, as in the works of P. Bourdieu, spatial images appeared, they had the nature of a metaphor, allowing a more or less convenient description of the system of social statuses. The question of where exactly this or that social actor is located within the framework of such a description seemed simply incorrect. The origins of the “spatial turn” in the social sciences were two interviews with Michel Foucault (1967 and 1982) about the special role of space for the study of power techniques. His thesis that “space is a privileged place for understanding how power operates” has not lost its relevance to this day. The rapid development of human geography led to an increase in interest in spatial research in other social sciences, especially since at the time of its final formation (at the turn of the 19th–20th centuries) in sociology, this interest was quite obvious, giving rise to its own classics of the study of social spaces. Later, this interest continued in works on the sociology of the city in the works of R. Park, A. Lefebvre, D. Harvey and others. Here, although in a slightly different connection, ideas were formulated that are extremely important for our problems. Among them, we should highlight the activist reading of spatial strategies of both power and society (the production of space), the localization of spatial strategies at the core of the Marxist analysis of peripheral capitalism, and the key role of space for understanding the specifics of the regime of territoriality.

Social space and its characteristics presuppose the presence in it of a certain kind of objects and types of social action and prevent others from occurring. For example, in a city apartment you can set up a

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vegetable garden or a livestock farm, but it is more convenient to use it differently, as a certain type of housing. Moreover, only from this point of view (an apartment is a city dweller's place of life) will this space be filled, but as a vegetable garden or grazing place it will be "empty". There are no expected objects-signs that will have at least some meaning for the observer. In other words, to the observer, space represents text that can be read in a certain way. The inability to read the text (lack of expected objects, different reading rules) leads to the statement that this space is "empty".

In our case, the observer is the government, since it is they who extend the status of inter-settlement territories to these spaces. In the ideas of power, quite clearly articulated in legal and economic works, completeness (mastery) is read in the presence of economic and administrative infrastructure, governing bodies, etc. Moreover, the economic structures themselves are fully defined in two versions: urban - plant, factory, social infrastructure, a specific type of building; rural - farm, used in accordance with the cadastre of farmland, etc. If the expected objects are not found, the space is perceived as "empty", endowed with the status of inter-settlement territories, and only the space filled in this way acts and is recognized as an object of management. The presence of something else in a given space that cannot be read by an observer does not make it full.

But there is a third circumstance. This space objectively turns out to be invisible, and the "organ of vision" of power is statistics. The settlement level turns out to be the lowest level here, at which statistics continue to record reality. However, we do not yet ask ourselves how adequate this fixation is. What is more important is that the counted population and other counted objects are not tied to the territory of a specific settlement, but are assigned to a larger municipal entity (district) as a whole. Considering the scale of the municipal districts we are considering in the north of the Irkutsk region (the area of the Zhigalovsky district is more than 24.8 thousand sq. km, the Ust-Kutsky district is about 34.6 thousand sq. km), residents of inter-settlement territories dissolve among the great Nowhere. Such deterritorialization of the object of management not only makes inter-settlement territories invisible to the power observer, but also calls into question the effectiveness of the territorial organization of power as a way of managing them.

At the same time, inter-settlement territories, already according to the 2010 census, cease to be domestic legal exotica, often covering up to half the space of the subject of the federation, and they are located not only in incredible distances, but often very close to actively developing settlements and territories. One of these territories, or more precisely, the peculiarities of the behavior of the authorities in

these territories, will be discussed in this article. Even in the previous period, this territory represented the periphery of the industrial civilization of the USSR, the periphery of power, but not a "emptiness." We will consider further the process of transformation of the periphery into "emptiness" in the absence of a control object.

From 2018 to 2021, the authors of the article conducted a series of studies (expeditions, observations, interviews, studying statistical data, conversations with informants) of inter-settlement territories in the Zhigalovsky and Ust-Kutsky districts of the Irkutsk region, located along the river. Lena is 500–800 km from Irkutsk, one of the centers of attraction of the macroregion. The survey was carried out from the village of Ust-Iлга, Zhigalovsky district, to the village of Turuka, Ust-Kut district (part of the Ust-Kut urban settlement) by water along the river. Lena.

The total length of the territory along the river, where settlements were previously located, is 320 km. Population (registered) in these territories in 2012–2020 ranged from 161 to 187 people. There are no economic facilities or registered enterprises in this territory, as well as permanent roads. The main route is the river. Lena: in summer - by boat, and in winter, communication with regional centers is possible on the ice of the river; There is no message in the off-season.

These spaces received the status of inter-settlement territories in 2012; Before that, there was a settlement structure there, albeit a degraded one. During the Soviet period, the maps of which the expedition members relied on during the preliminary study, about 30 settlements were noted on the territory, including those with a population of more than 1,000 people. (Orlinga village, Boyarsk village). In preparation for the expedition, in retrospective interviews with former residents of these territories, it turned out that most of the settlements had schools, including full ten-year schools, paramedic stations, clubs, and post offices; active communication was carried out along the river. Lena with regional centers; Most settlements had a centralized supply of electricity and had boiler houses. The main occupation of the population was hunting (hunting farms) and breeding valuable breeds of fur-bearing animals, and auxiliary activities included gardening, livestock farming, fishing, gathering wild plants, and some other types of economic activity. The main occupation of the residents also ensured a fairly high educational level (higher or secondary specialized education of hunters and game managers, specialists in breeding fur-bearing animals).

The relations of power/governance also turned out to be specific to the times of the USSR: Soviet power, like other administrative bodies, was relatively weak in the territory. According to the recollections of former residents, the main authorities were

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representatives of the procurement office, who bought the results of the activities of hunters and gatherers, which provided not only relatively high salaries, but also a high level of material supplies. Hunters, the elite of the local population, had a special status: respondents noted that on the site the hunter had almost complete power and freedom of action, limited only by the need to supply products (furs).

The settlements located in these territories were inhabited not only by the descendants of pioneers and graduates of game management faculties and pedagogical institutes who ended up here by distribution: people fled here from collective farms, from the hypercontrol of the Soviet government, from ideological pressure. Remoteness, traditionally viewed as a problem, a disadvantage that must be overcome, here acted as a resource that ensured relative freedom of life. But an extremely important point should be noted: the very possibility of such freedom and its material support were guaranteed by the state, while freedom arose in connection with its remoteness and disinterest in control. We have designated this position by the term “periphery (not absence) of power.” In essence, this territory for the government observer was a “black box”, where the input was some resources and the maintenance of social infrastructure, and the output was a valuable product, including an export one, while all government bodies were present on the territory. The difference between their work and the work of similar structures in other territories was based on a complex system of informal practices, the analysis of which is not included in our tasks. For us, the very fact of the existence of a territorial organization and the usual governing bodies (Soviet, party) is more important. In this case, we are not talking about “emptiness”, but about special conditions of management, in some sense reminiscent of modern conditions in the northern territories controlled by large corporations.

The situation began to change at the end of the Soviet era: the remote government that provided the local hunter with the status of “master” (the most common definition in interviews) degraded and eventually disappeared, and the “master” became an entrepreneur from Ust-Kut, Bratsk or Irkutsk. Accordingly, the status of the hunter himself changed: from the “owner” he turned into a hired worker, therefore, his remuneration also decreased. As a result, the process of population outflow, which was only weakly outlined in the 1980s, began to rapidly gain momentum: the social infrastructure was deteriorating; As a result of predatory timber extraction in the upper reaches of rivers and tributaries of the Lena, the main channel also became shallow.

The construction of the Baikal-Amur Mainline also had a significant impact on the formation of “empty” space. Until this time, it was along the river. Lena from the village of Kachug through the village of Zhigalovo and further, northern delivery was

carried out, which made it necessary to maintain conditions for navigation on the river, intensified navigation, and reduced the costs of maintaining social infrastructure in the territory. After the completion of the construction of the BAM, northern deliveries began to be carried out from Ust-Kut, and the space above the city along the river fell out of the regular flow of goods, which created difficulties in maintaining social infrastructure and led to its degradation. It should also be noted that the new (private) owners preferred to make a profit without investing any funds in the development of the territory. As a result, the outflow of the population turned into flight, especially since there was no need to run particularly far: at that time, the village (district center) of Zhigalovo became one of the strongholds for the development of the Kovyktinskoye field with several large enterprises and a relatively developed social infrastructure. The city of Ust-Kut looks even more successful: in addition to the key point of northern delivery to Yakutia, the center of the Verkhnelensky river shipping company, large timber and oil production enterprises are concentrated in the city.

As a result, legal economic activity in the described territory has practically disappeared. During the expeditions, 29 villages were examined, marked on old maps and directions (at present there are no formal settlements here); 19 of them are no longer inhabited; Secondary forest cover had already formed on the site of four villages. Somewhere, reinforced concrete slabs imported in the distant past, abandoned barges, rusted tractor parts, and other traces of a vanished industrial civilization have been preserved. In some former settlements, there were destroyed houses, outbuildings, stoves in place of houses, and village streets could be discerned.

In populated villages, the number of inhabitants ranges from one (minimum) to 37 (maximum); in most of the still “living” villages there are from one to five local residents, and only in the village. There were more of them in Orlinga and Boyarsk (17 and 37 people, respectively). In populated areas there is no centralized electricity supply, water supply, or telephone communications, while many abandoned buildings with signs reading “club”, “shop” and even “museum” have been found. Along 320 km of the river, two shops operate unofficially, one of which sells only bread, vodka and snacks, the second has a slightly wider assortment, but the store itself opens only “on demand”.

In almost every village you can find a building or its skeleton with a “school” sign (in the village of Orlinga there is even a two-story building); the last functioning school (in the village of Boyarsk) was closed on the eve of the expedition, in May 2021. The only legal form of employment in the territory turned out to be two boiler houses, the closure of which is expected in the near future, and post offices in five

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settlements, performing the functions of an Internet distribution center, pension service, etc. Not a single paramedic station was found along 320 km; There was no power there either - officials with formally assigned powers. Two villages had an elected head, although he did not have official status, since the status of the settlement itself did not exist. The closest employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs were, respectively, in the village of Zhigalovo or in the city of Ust-Kut. Other representatives of law enforcement and environmental agencies were also located in the regional centers.

It cannot be argued that power is completely absent here: during the expedition, the authors met several times with employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and representatives of environmental protection. But, according to our observations, this activity is partly related to forest fires and the ban on hunting during this period. According to local residents, the presence of authorities is very sporadic. The latter is quite understandable: in the absence of visible force majeure (fires, floods, murders, etc.), the “emptiness” is not of particular interest to the authorities. On the other hand, it is the absence of power that sets the boundaries of space, since at some distance, on the borders of the territory, power still exists.

In general, this description reproduces the classic example of a “shrunked”, “empty” social space, already described many times in the works of domestic social scientists. It probably would not have been of particular interest if it were not for the people and objects accidentally discovered in this “empty” space.

Already during the first expedition (2018), a completely comfortable estate was discovered in the “empty” space (absent in statistical descriptions, but quite visible on images from space), consisting of several large buildings located nearby - the master’s house, a bathhouse, outbuildings, houses for workers, etc., provided with autonomous water supply and electricity. At the same time, no traces of official registration of this estate were found. The actual owner of the estate (though without the formal status of owner) turned out to be an entrepreneur from the regional center. Such a building, located near a large city or at least a busy highway, would look like a completely ordinary place of recreation (or permanent residence) of a rich person. But we are talking about a territory hundreds of kilometers away from a big city, devoid of roads, mobile communications and communications. All materials for construction and life support products had to be transported along the winter road (river ice). In other words, we are talking about a fabulously expensive structure that has no practical use, since the expedition members did not find any economically active activity.

An attempt to understand the meaning of such an investment of tens, and perhaps hundreds of millions

of rubles became the starting point of the study. During preparations for the main expedition, it was found that the described case was by no means unique; similar cases were noted by informants in the Khabarovsk Territory and Altai, and in a number of other regions. And in each case, the common point was the distance from a large city and the controlling structures concentrated in it, and the special status of the place where the estate is located (inter-settlement or specially protected areas). Thus, it could be considered proven that such construction is not an isolated case, but a mass phenomenon that deserves careful study.

During the main expedition (June 2021), this was fully confirmed (expedition materials). Six similar estates were discovered in the “empty” territories: three fully built and three more under construction. At each of the estates lived workers, builders, watchmen, often making up the main population of the villages, an order of magnitude larger than the officially registered residents. At the same time, it was quite obvious that there was no income-generating activity in these estates. In addition to the estates themselves, other new or “renovated” buildings of a slightly different type were identified, which can be conditionally divided into dachas and dachas. According to informants, the owners of dachas, as a rule, are the heirs of deceased village residents who moved to regional centers (Ust-Kut, Zhigalovo village). In the case of dachas, two types of buildings are clearly distinguished, corresponding two types of owners: the first are rather modest buildings, often converted village houses; the second are two- or one-and-a-half-story buildings (with a mezzanine) with a balcony overlooking the river and a large fenced-off area. One of the informants defined: “The first are entrepreneurs like me, and the second are bandits.” The authors were unable to find out why the second category is bandits; from the interview it followed that “bandits” are people whom the respondent fears. At the same time, for both the former and the latter (“entrepreneurs” and “bandits”), the presence of such dachas was not so much a place of recreation as an object of status consumption. According to one of the informants, the usual dachas (near the regional centers) are either lazy or poor, while the “cool” own dachas and land right here, in the “emptiness.” Moreover, estates, estates and dachas differed significantly from traditional village buildings in Siberia. Firstly, there were no or almost no vegetable gardens and other forms of agricultural activity; secondly, these buildings often had gazebos and barbecue areas, which were not typical for village households. Even those houses that remained from the previous inhabitants were subjected to radical alterations. Thus, gates and gangways were cut into the walls of quite ordinary village houses for entry inside, i.e. the house was used as a garage for a motor boat and other equipment, only simultaneously

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serving as a temporary home. In some cases, the barn attached to the house served as housing (easier to heat), and the house itself was used as a warehouse and garage. In other words, there was something similar to a hunting or fishing winter hut, temporary housing, storage of tools and a vehicle for a hunter or fisherman, while no hunting or fishing enterprises were found on the territory.

The owners of dachas and farmsteads, as a rule, were residents of regional centers. The legal status of their possessions was determined there: in the case of borrowings, it was more often about inheritance; these were “former locals” who moved to the regional center and settled there. In the dacha variant, inheritance was less common; it was a purchase, albeit a rather specific one. It was not so much about the exact definition of the object becoming property, but about the legalization of one’s own presence in the “empty” space. Thus, one of the owners of the dacha said in an interview:

“I bought two hectares here in the village of Vysokovo. Yes, there is nothing there. There was a house, but it was burned down. This house was burned by the former mayor, who is now sitting in Irkutsk. And the house is good. I thought it could be repaired. <...> Now there is nothing there. Well, I thought, let it be” (male, 32–35 years old, resident of Ust-Kut, entrepreneur).

It should be noted that not only is there nothing in the village of Vysokovo - officially there is no village itself, as well as other settlements in the inter-settlement territory. There are no dachas and farmsteads, since there are no settlements, and certainly no estates with numerous buildings, maintenance personnel of up to two dozen workers, autonomous heat and electricity supply (solar panels with a total capacity of up to 100 kW), satellite communications and sewerage. As the survey showed (where possible), out of six estates, three had the status of an organization base. At least, this is what the informants said, although they could not always say which organization this base belonged to. In one case, we were talking about a long-term environmental project (stocking a tributary of the Lena River with fish, breeding wild boars and deer), carried out at the expense of a “socially responsible” businessman, who thereby received not only a form of legalization in the “emptiness” of himself (the project manager) and their workers (fish and wild boar caretakers), but also the actual possibility of “privatization” of up to a kilometer of the river bank where stocking was carried out, and more than 30 hectares of land for “restoring the population of ungulates”, in other words, unique opportunities for exotic hunting and fishing. At the same time, despite the presence of dozens of buildings, solar panels comparable in area to a swimming pool, and a significant number of workers permanently residing in the estate and near it, officially there is simply no village, but there is a place

where one person lives, recorded in statistics as resident of inter-settlement areas.

This situation, characterized by the remoteness of power from the place of action, leads to the fact that these territories simply fall out of the state system of organization and control of space. But they certainly exist, and often very significant: for example, in the Irkutsk region, more than 20 territories, constituting about a third of the entire territory of the federal subject, have the status of “inter-settlements” where people live. But existing management practices based on statistics do not work in this case: there are no tools that would allow this space to be included in the system of habitual, routine management, and there is no interest for government, law enforcement and control services to address these spaces. Therefore, it becomes, at best, a space of “prospective development, planning for the future” [Kovaleva, Makurina 2017].

The situation is further complicated by the fact that government officials also live in the same territory or close to it. In any case, local residents can include representatives of the district level of local self-government, employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, environmental protection, etc. Due to the status of “local resident”, they know that the “empty” space of inter-settlement territories is inhabited. And if the owners of dachas and farmsteads are still temporarily located in the surveyed area and their main housing, families, and sources of income are located in the regional center, then the employees of the estates live here year-round, often for several years, although they are registered in other places. Thus, in a conversation with an informant, a builder of one of the estates, it turned out that the entire team of builders consists of residents of the city of Tulun, Irkutsk region, which suffered from a flood.

“We are all from Tulun. When the city was washed away, we moved to Irkutsk. The owner there had already hired us and sent us here to build a base. Everything is there, there is a bathhouse, water, electricity, a satellite phone. We live normally. Pays well too. <...> The owner himself arrives by helicopter. Sometimes alone, sometimes with guests. Here they have everything: hunting, fishing, barbecue. <...> And us? We are building, there is still a lot of work to do” (male, about 45 years old, builder).

Of course, construction ends someday, and the hiring period for the hired crew also expires, leaving unregistered but relatively numerous residents in the “empty” space. As a study of already built estates shows, the builders are replaced by service personnel, also quite numerous. Moreover, more or less regular relations are established between the “locals” and the estate workers, and this is not the usual purchase of rural handicraft products by townspeople, but quite conscious mutual assistance.

“Well, we are helping the grandmother (village resident - interviewer’s note). If necessary or if asked.

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Why not help? Renovate a house somewhere, plow it, if necessary. And she will always help us. Different things happen. Somewhere she helps too. We live normally, and the people are normal” (male, about 45 years old, estate builder).

There is a fairly calm (as if they were “our own”) attitude towards the workers in the estates both from the local population, including residents of regional centers, and the attitude towards the owners of the estates, albeit with some wariness (“oligarchs”), is rather positive.

“M. (owner of the estate - interviewer's note) - well done. Others build houses for themselves in Europe, on warm seas, but he invests in his native places. Before him, there was nothing here. He built a church and all the houses. Well done, in a word” (male, retirement age, the only officially registered resident of a locality with an estate).

What emerges is, if not a community with established forms of interaction, then, in any case, a community, a group of people connected by the use of common spaces (in our case, rivers). Such compatibility is well known to residents of regional centers (including officials) as a type of relationship, but it is not recorded in any way in statistical descriptions.

But a person (official) cannot exist in a divided state, being an official during working hours, and a simple resident of the district the rest of the time. This is precisely what the technology for the presence of power in this territory is based on. Next, we will describe power and management in the “empty” space of intersettlement territories, based on a case in the Irkutsk region. Of course, there is absolutely not enough material for generalizing conclusions, however, we will try to put forward a fairly substantiated hypothesis.

The absence of a common territorial structure for the country (settlements as administrative units, local self-government bodies, social infrastructure, etc.) does not mean a complete absence of power in this space. Already in the first interview with an informant, a resident of one of the villages, they spoke about a female colonel (“a woman in our language”), the head of a police department, who “rides on a boat with three machine gunners and fines everyone.” However, the same informant said that “the police don’t interfere in our affairs, we sort it out ourselves. If they got into a fight somewhere and burned someone, then they did it themselves. Now, if there’s a murder or something else, then the colonel will come.”

Interestingly, as a local resident, the female colonel is quite aware of the estates in the territory. The manager of one of the estates complained that “the owner (the owner of the estate – authors’ note) swore strongly” when she (the colonel – authors’ note) was not allowed to spend the night in his absence, although “he himself said that strangers should not be

allowed in.” There are several interesting points in this case. Firstly, she, as a resident of the area, is aware of the presence of estates, the possibility of a comfortable stay in them, but as an official, she “knows” only about the environmental project, accordingly, the estate workers have the opportunity to not let her in. Secondly, it is significant that for the manager who is constantly on the territory, it is a “stranger” (“don’t let strangers in”), since he does not live in an “empty” space. At the same time, for the owner of the estate, the female colonel is “one of his own,” a necessary element of his presence in the “empty” space, and as an element of power, she is located and acts remotely, but it is with her (remote power) that relationships need to be built, through her (not only, but also) try to legalize their presence.

What a colonel is needed for, besides the fact that it can cause trouble, became clear from the following case. Along the expedition route on the bank of a stream flowing into the river. Lena, a new bathhouse was discovered, near which there was a gazebo, a barbecue and an equipped descent to the stream. According to the survey, this is a relatively new building; the first bathhouse built was burned down. According to the informant, since the construction of the bathhouse in the early 2010s. the development of this territory by newcomers began. The relatively large community of local residents at that time was dissatisfied with this circumstance, deciding to deal with it in the usual way. It was assumed that, as usual, the police would not be interested in local troubles, but it turned out differently: a full-fledged investigation took place with real punishment for the perpetrators, after which the “oligarchs” (estate owners) and their property were no longer touched, and the new bathhouse built stands on the same place, not locked and not guarded by anyone.

Moreover, a local resident, in the process of discussing a place for an overnight stop, dissuaded the expedition members from the proposed point, since there are “oligarch’s fields”: the “oligarch” is not just looking for opportunities for legalization in the “emptiness” (an environmental project, a base for a point of an environmental structure, etc.) d.) – he can mobilize the law, attract power into the “empty” space. Another informant also spoke about this option (to attract, mobilize power) in relation to “bandits”. Apparently, this opportunity makes them an elite among the local population, including not only official residents, but also other owners of dachas and farmsteads.

In other words, power exists remotely, visits this space sporadically, but under certain conditions can be mobilized. The most important condition for the mobilization of power is the preservation of the specific status of “invisibility” for new residents of the territory. Let us note that the most extensive forms of legalization of stay in intersettlement territories are aimed at maintaining this status. The most important

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common feature of local residents (and legally residing residents of former settlements, and new “dacha residents”, and “oligarchs”) is that they are not interesting to the authorities, are not visible to statistics, and even to the public opinion of the region. Violation of this rule can have the most unpleasant consequences both for the violator and for other inhabitants of the “emptiness”. Thus, the owner of one of the estates located on the surveyed territory was the ex-mayor of the city of Ust-Kut. Judging by the size and amenities of the estate, it began to be built before its owner became mayor. That is, being a “local resident”, the owner of Lenaleservice LLC, one of the largest enterprises in the city, he behaved like an “oligarch”, but, having received the status of an official of a fairly high level in the region, he found himself in a difficult situation. His legalization in the “emptiness” as an “oligarch” (“bought a couple of hectares”) was not enough for the mayor. In conditions of very fierce competition for power over a wealthy city and region, the presence of an estate and the privatization of farmland caused a scandal that attracted the attention of not only the district, but also the regional authorities, which resulted in a criminal case that is still ongoing and a year of imprisonment.

Staying on the “empty” lands of the “oligarch” under study while performing not particularly complex actions for his own legalization turns out to be quite acceptable. At the same time, being in the “emptiness” of a person in power, even the head of a local self-government, puts both him and the “emptiness” at risk; under these conditions, the mobilization of power begins not by an internal agent of space (“oligarch”, “bandit”, natural disaster), but by external forces.

It is quite understandable that this is a one-time action related to political events (elections of the head of the district), but it reveals the position that the authorities occupy in this territory, which we have designated by the term “periphery of power”: the authorities are present here remotely, at a distance. Regular control over space in this case (in the case of inter-settlement territories) is much more expensive than everything that this space can provide in the future. Moreover, in the gigantic territories of eastern Russia, such control often turns out to be simply unrealistic, due to which a remote form of control becomes the only possible one. But the periphery of power is not anarchy: it is precisely it that defines the boundaries of spaces where its presence is possible only at a distance; it allows/does not allow certain forms of legalization in this space; it sets behavioral boundaries, beyond which the visible and invisible population of “empty” spaces is strongly discouraged; and finally, it can be mobilized by certain actors located in this space.

The authors of the article, during four expeditions (from 2018 to 2022), examined the area in the upper reaches of the river. Lena from the village

of Ust-Iлга to the confluence of the river. Lena and r. Vitim, with entry into the river. Kirenga from the village of Okunaysky to the city of Kirensk. Existing and disappeared villages were surveyed (bypass, observation) for more than 1,400 km along the course of the Upper Lena and its tributary river. Kirengi, in total there are about 90 existing, disappearing and disappeared settlements. A total of 36 interviews were collected, including three interviews with former residents of the site, two interviews with the manager of a large company operating in the area; the rest of the interviews (conversations) were conducted during the expeditions. These were mainly village residents (17 respondents); Some respondents (14 people) were registered in regional centers, but more or less permanently lived in villages. Some of them did not indicate a permanent form of employment; three people noted entrepreneurship (farming, recreation) as their employment; two respondents introduced themselves as heads of settlements, although the rural settlement itself did not have an administrative status; eight respondents worked as river workers, loaders, sawmill workers, and construction workers. The respondents were predominantly men aged 35–55 years. We described the research technology in detail in previous publications devoted to this space. It should be noted that no differences in responses and interpretation of events were found either by gender or age. In addition to respondents, informants (random interlocutors) were used to complement the overall picture.

The expeditions made it possible to form three research cases, connected territorially, but representing different options for social space. The research strategies were more or less similar. Each expedition was preceded by a fairly long preparatory period (“long table”): statistics on the future research site were collected, media publications, maps from different times, and satellite images of the future route were studied. If it was possible to find a former resident of the territory through which the route was proposed, then a retrospective interview was taken. This made it possible to imagine the conditions of communication in advance, prepare a guide for future interviews, and determine the object of research. During the expedition, observations, photographs and video recordings of the route and the villages located on it (usually in former status), conversations and interviews with residents and visitors of the territory were carried out. When comparing the information received with the previously collected information, a more or less clear picture of what was happening in the territory was obtained.

The first case, including a section of the river. Lena, with a length of about 320 km south of the BAM, mostly consisted of inter-settlement territories assigned to the direct jurisdiction of the region, while the researchers excluded from the route the administrations of settlements that were not identified

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in this territory. Due to the absence of a settlement structure in this space, there are no (physically) representatives of the authorities, or rather, the latter are present at the borders of this huge area, in the regional centers, appearing sporadically in the intersettlement space. As a rule, the arrival of authorities (police, representatives of district administrations, environmental protection, etc.) is associated with force majeure circumstances - forest fires, dangerous crimes, etc. Visits of power also occur in cases where someone located in this space mobilizes it. Then, according to local residents, “the colonel, a woman in our opinion, appears with machine gunners.” Under normal conditions, power does not disappear, but is present on the periphery, maintaining the role of the main controller.

There is practically no social infrastructure in the territory: there are no schools, first aid stations and legal shops; After the BAM was put into operation, regular shipping, previously associated with northern deliveries, was stopped. Local residents (mostly from regional centers) move around this space on their boats in the summer and across the ice in cars in the winter. In fact, the very status of an intersettlement territory fixes a situation where in this space there is nothing that would be of interest to the authorities as a subject of ownership, control or regulation. From the point of view of the authorities, these hundreds of kilometers along the river represent a bare territory, without people, without economic entities, etc. Speaking in the terms of A. Lefebvre, power in this area ceases to “produce space”, to impart meaning to the objects of this space, that is, social space is replaced by geographical space, becoming just a territory.

But such a replacement of space by territory, a compression of space, exists only from the point of view of power. For the few residents of intersettlement territories and regional centers (Zhigalova, Ust-Kuta), everything looks somewhat different: space has shrunk exclusively for an external observer, while for a local resident directly included in this space, it has freed up, making many previously prohibited or, at least hard-to-reach activities - hunting, fishing, gathering, various forms of recreation; they build houses in “empty space” and inhabit it. Moreover, the “oligarchs” from the regional center are already starting to settle in here. We heard about such an “oligarch” almost in our very first interviews. In the village, where one person officially lived, there was an estate of several permanent buildings and houses for servants (about 20 people). The territory of the estate included plowed fields, a powerful system of solar panels that supplied electricity to the farm, a pen for keeping deer deer, a fenced-off section of the river, etc. The new “owner” began to develop the “emptiness” as a new local resident, joining in the production of the discourse of the vacated space. But all the mentioned objects were

simply not documented: officially there was a center for stocking a section of the river with fish, created by a socially responsible entrepreneur.

In this space, where “there is nothing,” quite complex social connections and hierarchies arise, associated not only with property stratification, but also with the role in the local division of labor, status (local / newcomer), opportunities to mobilize power located at a distance, the degree the legality of your stay in place, etc.

The second case (expedition in May–June 2022) is a section of the river. Kirenga is about 300 km long north of the BAM and has completely different characteristics. Regular navigation in this territory, as in the first case, is absent; Not everywhere (as well as on the Upper Lena) power lines are laid. However, unlike the first section, there are large settlements and enterprises (corporations) of the all-Russian level here. The official dominants of this space are the BAM and the Kovyktinskoye field, developed by Gazprom. Large settlements located on the river are mostly reoriented towards these dominants, especially in the Kazachinsko-Lensky region, where the deposit is located. Local activity is pushed to the periphery by large companies; At the field itself and in areas related to it, local residents are practically not involved. As interviews with oil company managers show, there are several reasons for this. Firstly, the qualifications of local residents do not correspond to the needs of the company, as a result of which local residents can only be used in auxiliary jobs. But here comes the “second thing”: high demand for temporary housing from corporations for visiting workers has led to a rapid increase in rental prices. Income from renting out real estate significantly exceeds the level of salaries offered for low-skilled labor (the rental price of a modest Soviet three-room apartment can reach up to 120 thousand rubles per month). Therefore, a significant part of the residents of the village of Magistralny (the closest relatively large settlement to the field, located on the BAM) en masse rent out their housing to employees of Gazprom and related enterprises (leaving their housing, they move to the regional center of the village of Kazachinskoye, located 15 km away). In addition, the very fact that a large number of highly paid oil and gas industry workers are located near the settlement creates additional earning opportunities: thus, unlike the first case, the “roadside economy” is actively present here. However, the poverty of the trading and service infrastructure, combined with rigid schedules and labor rules at the field, led to the emergence of a kind of local “Dutch disease”.

Next to a large corporation, all sorts of options for informal entrepreneurship have arisen in conditions of an acute shortage of everything necessary, especially housing and any forms of recreation. As you move away from the village of Okunaysky, where the main gas terminal is being

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built, from the regional center of the village. Kazachinskoye, Magistralny village (BAM), farms and recreational areas (hunting, fishing, leisure) appear that are not in the official register and on maps, but all these enterprises are within daytime transport accessibility (35–50 km on roads of varying quality) to large settlements and fields; Further large settlements along the river to the city of Kirensk are much less common.

It is important that, according to retrospective interviews with local residents, before the start of active development of the Kovyktinskoye field and the arrival of big money (until 2022–2023), the space gradually turned into an analogue of what was observed in the first case in intersettlement areas. In fact, a significant part of the surveyed territories had this status until 2022: “bandits from Ust-Kut” appeared here, dachas and bases were built, they fished, but then “the people rose up” and they disappeared. It is difficult to say how much the people took part in this, but at that time Gazprom began active work in this territory. Former inter-settlement territories were included in the nearest settlements, power became somewhat closer, and the territory again turned, at least at the level of declarations and legal norms, into a social space. Apparently, all agents who could impose their rules in this space were simply removed from the sphere of interests of the corporation. The district authorities now have an additional resource - tax contributions to the district budget, which made it possible, if not to breathe life into it, then to compensate for the most unpleasant aspects of degradation. Thus, in several villages included in the Kazachinsky municipal formation, solar panels were installed to provide local power supply, roads were built to allow access to the regional center by car in summer and winter, etc.

However, corporate control seems to be significantly more selective than state control, since only those areas that are in one way or another related to the company’s core activities are monitored, everything else is controlled much less or not controlled at all. Moreover, large firms consciously distance themselves from local problems and build settlements for their employees outside the villages in order to avoid additional payments and costs associated with the need to participate in the life of these settlements. The capabilities of regional authorities, as well as settlements, parts of which are sometimes 60–70 km apart from each other, are also quite limited. As a result, local life arises in the “gaps” between the zones of control on the part of the corporation and the municipal government: “farms” and “recreational zones” do not interfere, but in some ways help the corporation, for example, supplying its workers with high-quality meat and dairy products. At the same time, district or settlement authorities take on certain specified functions: for example, in one of the interviews, a woman farmer said that until very

recently (before the installation of solar panels in the village at the expense of the district budget), the village was illuminated by her diesel engine. However, as you move away from the resource center, the situation changes - there are fewer roads, but more villages with an extremely small number of remaining residents. Formally, these are not inter-settlement territories, however, from the center of the municipality (rural settlement) to the villages included in it, there is often such a significant distance that not legally, but in fact, their residents are in conditions of distant power; many of them officially live in the regional center, coming to their villages for the summer.

“My brother and I used to live here, the rest – some moved away, some died. Then my brother died, he was the eldest. So I was left here alone, living somehow. I’m planting potatoes and eating fish. In the summer people come from Irkutsk to go fishing. I also rent out the bathhouse to them, well, for housing. And when it’s autumn, I return to the village [district center of the village. Kazachinskoe - approx. authors]” (resident of a village along the Kirenga River, 72 years old).

In the above excerpt, it is important not only that the respondent does not live permanently in the village, but also the type of income - renting out housing to external agents who come for fishing, which is a quite common practice. As it turned out during conversations with residents of villages on the border of the Kazachinsko-Lensky and Kirensky districts, a specific situation has developed here with the distribution of powers in the field of environmental protection. Territory of the river The Kirenga and its tributaries (a spawning site for valuable species of fish) were placed under the jurisdiction of the Ust-Kut Fishery Conservation Center of the interdistrict department of the Angara-Baikal Territorial Administration of the State Fisheries Committee. The latter is located more than 500 km along the river from the study area, and in conditions of a shortage of funds for the purchase of fuel, regular monitoring of the river by environmental structures becomes simply impossible.

Thus, if in the first space power simply “leaves” legally, making the entire space “unobservable,” then in the second it still remains, but disappearing in one extremely important area - environmental protection, and it is here that other informal relations most actively arise. Their most common form is informal recreation: it can be a quite comfortable recreation area with houses for rent, with barbecue areas, fishing spots and boat docks; Three such recreational areas were discovered during the expedition. In conversations with their owners, it was constantly mentioned that this is not just a business, but the revival of a once-vanished network of settlements, the revival of the “native land” that became “empty” as a result of unreasonable government policy. At the same

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time, the consumers of such services, according to the same informants, are not locals, but visitors, however, these recreation areas have always been located near large settlements (Magistralny village, Kazachinskoye village).

But recreation can also be much more modest: in most villages in this area, rental houses were noted for those who came for fishing, and in this case a number of points should be noted. Renting can be carried out not only by residents of a given village, but also by their descendants, who have been living in the regional center for quite a long time. Often it is not a house that is rented, but a converted barn or bathhouse, and the house is used as a boat storage area or warehouse. However, it should be noted that currently or previously this building did not always belong to the renter: in “empty” villages, any abandoned building can play this role. The test takers themselves, although not always residents of the village, must have a constant connection with the village and be local. The influence of city money on the village economy has been written more than once [Ilyin, Pokrovsky 2016]. But in our case there are some differences: firstly, this craft is not the main one, but one of many crafts of the local population, and secondly, strictly speaking, this is a craft, not a business, and its content is not determined by a visiting city dweller, but local. Moreover, not everyone has the opportunity to rent temporary housing for hunting or fishing: they rent houses for the most part to “good people” who were recommended by mutual friends living in the city or regional center, they show due respect to the renter, etc. Different behavior may well cause not only refusal, but also aggression towards the “newcomer”.

Several interviews mentioned “bandits” who “came to catch our fish”; the same informants claimed that “the bandits had all the permissions to fish, but ours were not allowed to catch.” That is, we are talking about an attempt to organize completely legal fishing, but since legalization here bypassed the locals, the fishermen in the perception of the residents turned out to be “bandits.” The same thought in some cases applied to the “Muscovites” who “bought everything here, and now they are taking away the last thing.”

Local residents, although they did not have any permits to fish, were, according to respondents, in their right, since “this is our river,” and the fishing activity of local residents, most often living in the city of Kirensk, is based on this. Of course, we are not talking about fisheries on the scale of Kamchatka and Sakhalin, but, according to the informant, “there is enough for a living,” and the fishing places, apparently, have their own “owners.” As the informant noted: “This is our river [one of the spawning tributaries of the river. Kirengi - approx. authors]. We always set up nets here.” The motive of the “owner” was extremely important for respondents

and during the expeditions of 2021 and 2022, this created legitimacy in their own eyes for the claims of local residents to special rights in relation to their place of residence.

The most unusual phenomena were recorded in the third case (expedition from Ust-Kut to Vitim - July–August 2022) with a total route length of 720 km. However, the specificity of the social space that interests us was discovered only in its northern part (from the city of Kirensk): here were all the elements observed in previous expeditions, in this area there were no publicly accessible year-round routes, power lines, in fact, communication with the regional center and then was possible only during the navigation period. A teacher from one of the few rural schools in the area told how she was unable to take her students to the regional center to take the Unified State Exam on a tractor (there was no road traffic or passenger traffic along the river during this period). In a small area of inter-settlement areas facing the river, estate construction was recorded (with a mowed lawn, garden benches by the river and even a “house church”). Hunting is also widespread in this territory, although, unlike the first site, it had not a recreational, but a completely pragmatic meaning. One of the respondents mentioned how the killed elk “fed” the entire village, how bear skins, other fishery products, and wild plants were sold.

“Of course, people don’t come to us as often as we would like. But everyone who comes just has a blast. Here you have fishing that you won’t find anywhere else, and hunting. And yours, from Irkutsk and Bratsk. I just don’t like Muscovites: everything is wrong with them. I remember once even some Japanese came in and then thanked me for about three hours” (foreman at the pier, 53 years old).

Here one could also find dying villages characteristic of the Upper Lena. As in previous expeditions, the main population is concentrated in regional centers and large villages. Ust-Kut with its construction projects and the emergence of regional and federal giants is a powerful center of attraction. In this territory there are significantly more large, “living” settlements with operating enterprises, social infrastructure (schools, kindergartens, cultural centers, paramedic stations) in this territory than in previous locales, especially in the area between the cities of Ust-Kut and Kirensk to the urban-type settlement of Alekseevsk, libraries); The river in this section is navigable. From Ust-Kut, which is a large station of the BAM, northern delivery is carried out, and there is also passenger service. Despite the fact that there are roads here, most of them are “technological” for the needs of pipeline builders, and local residents are not allowed to use these routes without a special paid permit.

“We are not allowed there, there is a barrier, a guardhouse with a watchman. There is a road there for

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oil workers, but ordinary people don't bother to travel there" (village resident, 54 years old).

Not only the roads are separated from the villages, but also the oil workers' settlements themselves; mobile communications are also tied to rotational camps, and, as stated in one of the interviews, the administration is not going to buy the tower, and in the future communications will "go away" along with the oil workers. Such a "wall" becomes a vivid embodiment of "the main trophies of the victors in the war for space" - an expression of freedom that allows you to "escape from a given area" without worrying about the consequences [Bauman 2004, p. 19]. But the "wall" is being built on both sides as an attempt to separate the local world from the global order of corporations: in three settlements, barriers are installed at the entrance (a structure quite uncharacteristic for Siberian villages), which should "keep out oil workers who have completely destroyed the road with their cars."

In this territory, the dichotomy between the world of large projects (BAM, Kovykta, pipeline) and the local community is most clearly manifested. The settlements of Gazprom, Transneft, and INK are located separately from the settlements of local residents, who are practically not involved in work: the main workforce here is shift workers. Large roads, large enterprises, temporary (rotational) camps, etc. - this is one world, and the river and taiga are another, strikingly different in the very principle of organizing space. The corporation is temporary and "alien," constructed, and the local community is a world of villages, albeit dying ones, "given by God" [Luke 1996], and constitutes, according to informants, "the essence of our land."

Despite all the heterogeneity of the described cases, they are united by the appearance, within a space filled with social life, of a desocialized space in which local residents and their communities dissolve and become "invisible." Local life from the position of an external observer (authorities, corporations) looks insignificant in this case, not affecting either significant economic processes or the foundations of social organization. This view is strongly supported by official statistical observation, which records a rapid decline in population, compression of the settlement network and curtailment of economic activity. In the first two cases, this view is largely confirmed by expeditionary observations. The difference in the third case is even more striking, where, along with the described plots, a unique figure of the local "baron", the "owner" of the river and taiga appears: he is not included in the world of large projects, but creates an original social space from the remnants of the local community and new settlers.

The authors of the article heard about the "owner" of these places long before they entered his space: one of the respondents, living in a village that was located along the route of the third expedition,

told how the village was dying out, how all opportunities for work had practically disappeared:

"That's when T. [last name of our hero - approx. authors] will come to power, well, you understand, when he comes here, everything will change: he will plow the fields, there will be livestock, and there will be work. Where he went, it was like that everywhere" (one of three village residents, over 65 years old).

They also talked in interviews about the areas of activity of this "owner". The basis of his business is logging, lumber production, this is where his entry into the region began, and transport companies were established by the same "owner" to transport timber: first a motor transport company, then a flotilla of river vessels. By the time of the expedition in the Irkutsk regions of the river. In Lena, these vessels have become the main river carriers, which provide northern delivery, transportation of goods of the entrepreneur himself, and passenger transportation. In one of the former settlements there are factories that produce lumber for domestic and foreign consumers; in addition, there are forest plots, piers for loading timber onto ships, trading enterprises of various profiles, and a construction company. A few years ago, a new direction appeared - agriculture (meat and dairy), the center of which is located down the river.

"He himself told us that the forest does not last forever, we need to invest in the land, then they began to buy collective farm shares, plow the land, various livestock, raise cows and bulls, and sow grain. Consider that to V. [name of the locality - approx. authors] all the land that is in business now belongs to him" (enterprise employee, resident of a village on the Lena River, over 40 years old).

During the entire expedition, the participants only once (on the Kirenga River) heard feedback about a representative of the municipal government. At the same time, "owner" T. was mentioned in one way or another by all the informants who entered into even a brief conversation with us, since his activities and his enterprises determine the appearance of the territory much more than the construction of the Power of Siberia pipeline taking place there.

At the same time, about this entrepreneur on the Internet, in addition to official certificates of registration of his enterprises and their financial statements, for 20 years of his activity, one can find only two panegyric articles in the media (2009 and 2018) and information that in 2013 he stood for election to the Legislative Assembly of the Irkutsk Region, but chose to withdraw his candidacy. In the zone of his interests (more than 300 m along the river), we did not find any palaces or estates, acting as elements of prestigious consumption and reflecting the key status of this person. There was a feeling that he not only did not strive for publicity, but avoided it as much as possible, while he could not be classified as a shadow actor: his enterprises show an official

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turnover of 4.3 billion rubles. (2021) and it benefits from regional subsidies for passenger transportation.

Information about him was mainly obtained from the stories of the local population and its workers. Unlike large companies, which, according to the informant, “do not hire anyone closer than a thousand kilometers from here,” T. employs both locals and shift workers from among residents of nearby areas and citizens of states - former Soviet republics. Moreover, the working conditions of shift workers differ from the requirements imposed on local residents: “Once an assistant was sent to us from T., well, this one, from a shift. So he worked with us and kept cursing the “master”. He said: “You have heaven, and there is hell.” (male, resident of a village on the Lena River, 54 years old, loader foreman). And this despite the fact that shift workers are paid for travel to their place of work, provided with three meals a day and special clothing, they have their own shops and recreational areas. Since even on the basis of superficial observations we can conclude that the number of shift workers is significant, apparently they are also satisfied with the wages. “Hell” boils down to extremely harsh discipline imposed by the “master”, which almost repeats the working conditions in gold mines described in historical studies.

“One guy told me. They arrived by bus for the shift, and there were drunk people and bulls lying around; all of them, despite the fact that they had just arrived, were fined five thousand. He himself does not smoke and was sober. He went to his superiors to complain, and he was fined another seven thousand for disrespect for his superiors. So it turns out that he hasn’t worked even a day and already owes twelve thousand. Everything is like this for them: work all day, rest only when a break is announced, if you drink - a fine, smoke in the wrong place - a fine, for a fight - a fine, and money only after the shift” (resident of a village on the Lena River, 51 years old).

The requirements for locals are less stringent; however, wages, according to informants, are lower than for shift workers. The relationship between the “owner” and the locals is not easy. On the one hand, he is undoubtedly a “benefactor.” According to the informant, in villages where he has good relations with the residents, his enterprises build roads and install solar panels in them, which is a significant benefit for an area where there is no power line; The “owner” can give residents firewood for the winter (waste from sawmills), sell grain or flour at a discounted price, “not notice” additional passengers or cargo on his ships, or vice versa, but for this you need to be friends with him.

“I once brought berries to D. [name of the former settlement where the main production is located - approx. authors], which ours collected. Real, taiga. They have a special smell and taste. I wanted to sell it to him, but he resisted. “I won’t take it,” he says, “at this price.” And he offers me a completely ridiculous

price, although both I and he know the price. Only he didn’t take it. Well, in order not to offend him by trading through his head, I just gave it to his deputies, without any money” (the head of a village on the Lena River, over 50 years old).

On the other hand, the bad attitude of the “owner” towards a particular village is associated with encroachments on his “will”: for example, in one of the interviews, a respondent, when asked why he does not keep livestock, explained that the main problem is feed, which is only available at T. But when a local resident approached him, the “owner” refused, saying that he had his own bulls and cows, but would readily provide food if the locals began to raise poultry. However, the villagers changed their minds, fearing that the “owner” would demand that the bird be sold at too low a price, and would be deprived of food for refusal. After this incident, the “refuseniks” were among the outcasts for some time, but they paid off with the skins of valuable breeds of animals.

It is quite obvious that if the relationship of the “owner” with shift workers can be characterized as critically tense, then with local workers and residents they are very contradictory: he orders “his own”, and tries to come to an agreement with the locals. From the collected material, it is not entirely clear whether the “owner” is building any kind of relationship with the builders of the pipeline, with the developers of the gas field, but relations with the local authorities are clearly formed: he provides (almost without the knowledge and initiative of the local authorities) milk for schoolchildren and pupils kindergartens, helps maintain transport infrastructure on the river, and often solves settlement problems.

“The district has been promising us a pier for five years now. They applied everywhere, even wrote to the prosecutor’s office, but to no avail: some important [officials – approx. authors], wrote everything down and left. And everything remained as it was. And he just took it and welded the pier” (resident of a village on the Lena River, 51 years old).

The distributed nature of T.’s business involves not just maintaining existing, but also building new transport infrastructure.

During the expedition, more than a dozen localities were noted where sections of the road and bridges across tributaries of the river were built using heavy equipment. Lena. These objects, which violate all environmental and often building standards, do not exist de jure, but become an important element of local life and ensure the connectivity of small settlements. In conditions of acute insufficiency of roads, it is this infrastructure that becomes for local residents the most important tool for transforming individual inhabited localities into an integral space, a way of “stitching” a patchwork quilt of villages and towns into a more or less unified whole. For an outside observer who bases his analysis on these statistical descriptions, this connection is not obvious, but for the

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local population it is everyday and significant. If the authorities “forgot” about them, “abandoned” (“for the authorities we are not here”), then T. took on the function of a center ensuring the coherence of space and communities, thus becoming the performer of authority functions that turn out to be burdensome for the authorities and are carried out outsource it.

The collected array of interviews and observations allows us to conclude that there is a clearly emerging trend towards the degradation of local communities, although there is also a unifying point that arises from external contacts: all representatives of the community are local residents. Judging by the interview data, local is not just an indication of localization in space, but a special and privileged social status. At the same time, within the community the level of solidarity seems to be quite low: for example, many respondents, especially residents under 50 years of age, noted that “some people work, while others drink vodka and want to ride into heaven on someone else’s hump.” But not only locals inhabit this space: on the same territory, “locals” and “newcomers”, “population” and “shift workers”, “railroad workers” and many other social groups exist, practically without noticing each other. At the same time, the conflict for space described by D. Harvey for the city and Z. Bauman regarding the global perspective does not occur precisely because, living in the same territory, they live in different spaces.

The space of the locals has already taken shape and consists of all the elements that have fallen into the “world of the river”, and it is not so important whether these are the remains of Soviet infrastructure or communication towers installed by pipeline builders, newly plowed fields or taiga and river fisheries. For the “river people” (locals), these are all their survival resources. The special status of local people, rooted in the territory, allows them to lay claim to all these resources. And the status itself is very peculiar: on the one hand, they are the “owners” of the land and the river, on the other hand, they suffered from the collapse of the Soviet system, and need guardianship and care from the authorities, who “don’t see us at all, they think that We are not here.” At the same time, as noted above, locals differ in the degree of rootedness (registered, those who come from the regional center for the summer, those who “hang around,” those who survive, etc.).

True, this does not prevent every local from considering himself the “owner” of this space and demanding special treatment. The corporate space is built in completely different coordinates: it is a mega space, covering a huge part of the country, neighboring countries, included, if not in the global world, then in a significant part of it - Eastern Eurasia. “River World” for them is just one of the “empty territories” through which the pipeline is laid to the space where consumers are located. The

characteristics of a territory are determined not by the local population, but by the system of laws regulating the construction or production of hydrocarbons, as well as informal agreements between the corporation and various levels of government - from the federal center to the district. They are “strangers,” but privileged “strangers” who solve problems at the federal level.

In relation to regional and regional authorities, for which large local corporations are not the object of management, but “senior partners”, there is an ideologeme about the multi-effects that their presence will cause in the subject of the federation, and an attitude about the benefits that the corporation brings to the local population. This partly applies to regional centers (mainly the city of Ust-Kutu, the nodal point of the territory). But in general, with the exception of necessary contributions to district and regional budgets, corporations diligently distance themselves from the “random place” in which their activities are carried out. The desocialization of space, its discursive transformation into “territory” fits well into the power discourse of shrinking space, which ensures the legitimization of such a view. The space of power appears no less complex, although different. In theory, it is the government, primarily local, that should participate in the production of social space or, at least, organize it. But in conditions when different parts of the settlement are separated from each other by tens of kilometers of roadless terrain with the river as the main and often the only transport artery, control, and even more so, enforcement of compliance with the rules and the production of order, are hardly feasible. Moreover, it is irrational, since efforts to produce order for the authorities (local, state) require much greater costs than the benefits that, in principle, this territory and its population can provide.

In this case, we can also note an objective circumstance: a certain homogeneous power exists only in the imagination of publicists. In reality, power levels and subjects are in a state of complex and changing relationships, having their own, not always coordinated interests: they differ in the level of ideas, resources, tasks and much more [Molyarenko 2018]. Local authorities (primarily district) build rather complex relations with regional authorities. The second one, traditionally acting as a donor, determines exactly what volume of benefits will be distributed to the lower level and under what conditions these benefits will be given. From this disposition comes the desire to present the situation in the territory so that this resource becomes maximum and provided on the most favorable terms, that is, first-order distortions arise. In turn, the authorities of the subject of the federation have their own reporting parameters and their own KPIs, and they also act as a recipient in relation to the donor - the central government. Moreover, it is at this level that statistical information is legalized, since in fact this is where the authorities

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for recording statistical indicators are located. In order for the region/krai to receive the maximum amount of resources on the most favorable terms, a second-order distortion arises, which is transmitted to the level of federal government. As a result of working with this already distorted picture, an idea of the federal government about the territory arises, which is transmitted to lower levels. Possible directions and parameters of government activity at the lower level (regional, district, settlement) descend there along with resources. Since the picture was created on the basis of a distorted database, the framework of activity outlined by the higher authorities turns out to not completely coincide or not at all coincide with the reality that is supposed to be streamlined and which needs to be managed. At the same time, the authorities, at least at the district and settlement level, are well aware of the current state of affairs, understand the differences between the contrived reality recorded in documents and true objectivity, but they cannot legalize their “local knowledge”. In this case, the conditions it has constructed (risks, threats, benefits), under which the higher government provides resources, will simply collapse.

No less dangerous is inaction, which causes discontent among residents who have their own vision of what the authorities should do in their space. They embody their ideas not only in informal activities, but also in letters, complaints to higher authorities, and appeals to the prosecutor's office. Each such appeal is a blow to local authorities, which can be fatal, especially in the conditions described above, when real control over the territories is unlikely or difficult to achieve due to their inaccessibility.

Only a special agent who is free enough to connect many agents located in the same territory, but in different spaces, can compensate for this “fork” of threats (at the same time, it is necessary not to disturb the picture of the world at a higher level and at the same time contact with real residents of real space). The “owner” of the taiga becomes such an agent. Of course, he is, first of all, an entrepreneur who makes money from everything that is located in the river space - from logging, livestock farming, logistics, transportation, trade, and crafts of the local population. Even unprofitable passenger service with the help of regional subsidies begins to justify itself, since the “owner” is the main carrier, who, quite possibly, has contacts with “black” lumberjacks, whose product, when it reaches legal warehouses and marinas, acquires legal status.

At the same time, the “owner” solves the very social problems of the population (transport, employment, availability of electricity and firewood for the winter, and much, much more) that lie in the area of responsibility of local authorities. The government takes off its social functions and transfers them to the “owner”, takes them outside, to “outsource”. Thus, the “owner” allows the local

authorities, with minimal distraction to satisfy the demands of the residents, to calmly communicate with the regional authorities, and the population, in turn, still receive vital benefits. In essence, it is for this reason that residents of the territories adjacent to the “owner’s” possessions are waiting “for him to come to power.” In turn, the “owner” receives from the local authorities not only certificates of honor, but also the opportunity to remain “invisible” in the public space.

The “owner” of the taiga is authoritative not only for settlements and the region, but also for higher-level authorities. One of the consistent motives articulated by all the entrepreneurs who agreed to be interviewed during the expeditions was the assertion that they were “restoring” the former wealth of the territory. But, in contrast to these most often declarative statements, the “owner” of T. is implementing this revival practically: his workers constitute the main, albeit not permanent, population of five villages; the former settlement itself looks like a large settlement, almost a town; Through his efforts, roads are being laid, not temporary ones (for the purposes of pipeline construction), but roads that can be used by local residents. Jobs appear on an extended territory distant from the “owner’s” property, and the presence of regular communications allows for more efficient use of the results of local fisheries. In other words, it allows authorities at both the local and regional levels, as well as employees of all-Russian holdings, to declare their beneficial influence of presence in the territory: the results are visible, they can be pointed out, thereby maintaining the structure of agreements at a different level.

Without such interest of the regional administration, it would hardly be possible to maintain “invisibility” at the level of a district or settlement, since, as the experience of expeditions shows, a small glitch in the system of agreements is enough for an agent to become “visible” to the repressive apparatus. Thus, during the 2021 expedition, we were told about the fate of the former mayor of Ust-Kut, who, when he was an entrepreneur (the head of the Lenalesservice enterprise), built an estate in “empty space.” However, this estate instantly became “visible” as soon as the entrepreneur became mayor: representatives of law enforcement agencies became interested in these buildings, which was the reason for his arrest. Perhaps it was precisely with the understanding of these risks that T.’s refusal to participate in political activities was connected: the mediator himself (and in fact our hero performs this function) does not have power or some kind of personal power resource (in any case, the presence of such a resource was not mentioned at all). in one interview), but it is he who has the opportunity to mobilize power, to call it into the “empty space”, into the territory.

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Conclusion

What is the reason for new residents, both temporary and relatively permanent, to remain in the “emptiness”? In this case, it is worth paying attention to two levels of observation of the “emptiness”. We tried to present the first level above. This is the level of the state, the level of a remote observer, when we see a reduction in the network of settlements, a compression of social space towards large centers, where the management and power structure is preserved, and resources are condensed. This socio-economic and political view has already been embodied many times in specific studies.

But another view is also possible, an anthropological one, the view of a local resident, a resident of a town near the “shrunk”, “empty” space. For him, space does not shrink, but expands. If in more populated lands there is a struggle for space near the river, for access to hunting grounds, and big money is paid for this, then here everything is different. It is in the “shrunk” space that the local resident has access to hunting and fishing, collecting forest wild plants and much more. Moreover, in conditions of distanced power, fairly strict environmental restrictions operate much more softly, and informal rules replace formal ones. This prospect of returning to capacity makes it possible to reconsider the reactive tendency of the actions of the subjects of political domination. The analysis shows that the accepted dichotomies (government - society) largely obscure the specifics of the development of “empty” territories. Attention to practices of development and a processual perspective can cast a new light on the specificities of both power and peripheral communities. A kind of confirmation is found here in Michel Foucault’s proposal about the imperative of demarcation between power and the state: “Analysis in terms of power should not postulate as initial data the sovereignty of the state, the form of law, or the comprehensive unity of a certain domination; most likely, on the contrary, these are only terminal forms of such analysis. By power, it seems to me, we must mean, first of all, the multiplicity of relations of power that are immanent in the area where they are exercised and that are constitutive of its organization; understand a game that, through continuous battles and clashes, transforms, strengthens and inverts them <...> by power we should understand strategies <...>, the institutional crystallization of which is embodied in state apparatuses, in the formulation of law, in forms of social domination”

In this situation, the question about the other side becomes fair: what is the interest of the authorities, what forces it to reduce the density of regulation, while in general the tendency of hyperregulation clearly dominates? Is power solely a hostage to the development of the situation, which we designate as the “periphery of power”? In our opinion, it can be considered not only as a situation (which it certainly

initially is), but also as a model for organizing the management of territories where the normal functioning of government is associated with significant difficulties. The reduction in costs for the exercise of power in this territory occurs due to a decrease in the density of power regulation in the absence of force majeure; power may not be manifested. Even symbols of power (the national flag) become not so much external attributes of power, but rather a symbol of the organization of a new system of statuses - “locals, permanent residents” vs “newcomers”. The former legitimize the presence of the latter in the “empty” space, and in this sense, the respectful appeal of the newcomer “oligarch” to local pensioners is indicative. Appeal to remote real power is the ultima ratio in conflicts related to the arrangement of such a social system. This allows the authorities not only to radically reduce management costs, but also to “stay while leaving”, performing the functions of domination in the territory without direct presence.

The downside of this model is the growth of subjectivity of the “absent” population, represented in the status of “owner”: the owner of the estate was called the owner, while the manager was also called the mistress; the legal residents of these places considered themselves the owners of the land, having the opportunity to let in or not let in the “Irkutsk people”; The owners of dachas and farmsteads called themselves owners. But dachas near the regional center, not to mention the suburbs of large cities, have a rather weak resource for distancing themselves from the authorities. Here, on the periphery, it was the residents who determined the forms of (re)development of space, forms of communication with each other.

The figure of the “owner” becomes objectively necessary for such an organization of territory management, since it performs the functions of the initiator, subject and main consumer of the social order, the guarantor of which can be the remotely acting government. She, accordingly, is the beneficiary of the “periphery of power” model. The population that does not have the status of a master is not interested in interacting with the authorities under such conditions; it lives either by the rules of “normal authority” (subordination) or by social and/or spatial marginalization (evasion from power). But the “owner” is not only an object of control, but also a subject, an inevitable partner. It is no coincidence that the Soviet experience, reflected in retrospective interviews, showed in such spaces the peripheralization of the actual bodies of Soviet power.

However, this space itself was created and limited by the state, and it is located not only in the vastness of eastern Russia, but also in completely populated territories [Savchenko 2005]. The political transformations of recent years have led to the formation of a dirigiste state, much more striving for

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total control than the USSR, which has sunk into oblivion. But this control also requires corresponding resources, and where these resources (people, funds, management infrastructure, communications, etc.) are not enough, control turns out to be impossible. “Space compression” is not only the process of migration (seasonal and irrevocable) from rural to urban, from small towns to larger ones; it is also a statement that these (certain) territories cannot be controlled by the state, since there are not enough resources, and it is not profitable.

And here a paradox arises: the dominant system of organizing the interaction between government and communities (subject and object of management) does not fit well with the emerging system of “periphery of power” and the inevitable figure of the “master”, which is explained, on the one hand, by the obvious multidirectional trends (hyper-regulation vs decrease in the density of regulation), and on the other hand, the admissibility of more or less recognized mutual subjectivity. Overcoming the paradox is a mutual withdrawal into the shadows: the space formally remains “empty”, and the authorities “do not observe” it and are clearly present only beyond its borders. Interactions are built exclusively on the basis of informal practices, or at least on the basis of a “mutual wink” [Furman 1994], when formal norms are implemented, but with informal content.

Being in an “empty” space, removed from the structure of the territorial organization of the state, the “locals” acquire something that the vast majority of the country’s residents are deprived of – the status of “master”. In other words, they turn out to be not only a potential object of management, however, almost invisible, but also a governing subject, or rather, self-government that exists today almost only in name. As the population concentrates in large cities, the number of such territories will increase, and dirigiste power with hyper control and resources will be concentrated where it can realize itself, while outside the centers of power, a different life may well begin to unfold. But that will be a completely different story.

In the early 2010s. The regional “barons” and governors of the 1990s were described as a special type of power and economic actors. In the conditions of a disintegrating social space after the collapse of the USSR, such actors were able to unite very different, often conflicting groups, and set the rules of the game at the level of federal subjects. They were, unlike the criminal “roofs” that preceded them, completely legal authority figures, capable of imparting the necessary degree of legality to the agents under their control. But their strength and power were built not only on this: they connected the population and business, residents of the regional center and remote northern villages, regional politics and its electorate, various regional communities and the federal center. Essentially, from 1994 to 2004, they acted as the main mediators, determining the nature and direction of the country’s

development, and “stitched” the social fabric with their activities.

Later, the rapid rise in energy prices allowed the central government to refuse the services of these mediators, and the function of a global intermediary began to be performed by the central government and its “vertical” in the territory, turning the latter into a world of global law. Currently, governors have transformed from mediators holding together the country’s social space into mid-level officials, agents of the “vertical”, distributing funds in directions set from the outside. But the presence of huge, sparsely populated and not particularly well-connected territories in the east of Russia led to the fact that a significant part of them actually found themselves in the shadows, becoming “invisible” and, importantly, uninteresting to the state itself. It is quite obvious that the recording of the compression of social space is a reflection of the disinterest of state authorities in controlling this space; more precisely, the fear of the emergence of a powerful competitor representing global law becomes significant in this case. To do this, it is quite enough to control the main highly profitable sectors of the economy and the main (imperial) cities that serve as resource centers in the territory. Actually, the situation here fits well into the theory of “different Russias” described by N.V. Zubarevich and other authors of geographical classifications [Zubarevich 2012]. However, we are interested not so much in “different Russias” (megacities, large and small cities, rural settlements), but rather in the spaces that the authorities, for one reason or another, found it convenient to recognize as “empty”, absent from statistics and reports. Moreover, if space can be considered “empty” (shrunk), then domination over the territory remains the most important condition for the self-preservation of power and its self-justification. And in order for the state power to retain the ability to control the territory, an intermediary is needed between it and the social space, which it perceives as territory. The authorities outsource their presence and control over the territory and trust an intermediary, whose role in our case is the “owner” of the taiga (and not only him).

In different parts of the surveyed space, we discovered various, smaller and even less visible intermediaries. All of them, not being local, were in one way or another connected with the local space, implemented various practices that provided them with rootedness, that is, “invisibility” from the power discourse, had the ability to mobilize power present in the distance, and connected it with the “world of the river.”. It is also important that all of them, at least at the level of self-reflection, revived their native land: they not only practically acted as trusted people of the authorities (usually regional), but also merged the elements of the territory into a kind of new space, a local order that, until a certain time, preferred to remain in the shadow.

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Thus, we can assume that the figure of the mediator is not unique, but typical, at least for frontier spaces. Whether with the help of these mediators some new consolidation of social space will emerge or whether they, like the once regional “barons,” will

disappear at the next turn of Russia’s modern history, the near future will show. However, that will be a completely different story.

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