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Forestry villages in the Russian North - social capital and subsistence at the margins

Dominique Moran

- 1 This paper focuses on conditions in forestry villages in the northern rayony of Perm' oblast', in European Russia, which form part of the Russian "Near North". It describes the collapse of the local forestry economy after 1991, and against the backdrop of these economic conditions, the paper then discusses the survival strategies being employed by the inhabitants of the villages of these rayony, such as outmigration, household bifurcation, use of domestic and environmental resources, and the importance of social capital. The paper's aim is to contribute to the knowledge and debate around the geographical expression of post-Soviet transformation. Within post-Soviet human geography, this has been a concern of many authors who have studied geographical variations in the impact of transition, and have drawn attention to the importance of the Soviet context, or pre-conditions, in the understanding of different trajectories of transition. The paper also has a place within the debate in human geography centred on the nature of transition itself, and the interplay between neo-classical models of transition which assume an endpoint of "western" capitalism, and the work of authors such as Smith and Pickles, who challenge the unilinearity of transition, writing:

The reconfiguration of economic and political systems occurs in concrete social and cultural milieux, and these milieux provide the context within which institutional reform, economic liberalisation and political democratisation are reworked. Post-communist reform is about the reworking of modernity and the reconfiguration of the economic and political institutions and practices put in place (or adapted from pre-communist days) by state socialism. It is also, at the same time, a restructuring of the social relations of actors, the construction of new identities and the mobilisation of existing cultural resources to new ends¹.

- 2 Bradshaw, Stenning and Sutherland (1998) summarise the position when they criticise the neoliberal unilinear approach.

...the orthodox view that the imposition of capitalist structures and institutions (such as private property, the competitive imperative and a monetised accounting system) will force the universal development of free-market rationality, and if it does not, it is simply necessary to wait, tinker with the system, and delete any irrationalities. That those so-called irrationalities are embedded within local economic practice is not a view which is frequently countenanced. ... Each region faces a choice of futures, constituted as much through social, political and cultural practice as through the purely "economic". Thus, any attempt to understand the path and process of economic transformation and differentiation in the Russian regions must take account of this².

- 3 In this piece of research, the "social and cultural milieu" are the conditions of the research areas at the time of the collapse of the USSR, and the strategies employed by the inhabitants of these areas are part of the response of local people to the changes they are experiencing. Therefore, the main focus of this paper is the coping mechanisms employed by the inhabitants of the forestry villages of these rayony, in response to the conditions in which they find themselves. Households draw upon a wide variety of sources to provide the inputs they require. Food, water, land, firewood, money and labour are all essential, and the household engages in a network of exchange relationships, procurement and production practices, in order to satisfy its requirements. O'Brien et al. (1996) describe the system of household production in terms of three contributing factors, human, social, and technological capital. In this case, human capital refers to the availability of labour. Social capital is defined as a social infrastructure which can create competitive advantages for individuals, organisations or communities. O'Brien et al. argue that the USSR saw intermediary structures between the individual and the state as potential competitors, and attempted to destroy traditional types of voluntary associations, informal marketing and trading networks, and other forms of community attachments which exist in rural areas. However the state did not destroy all forms of informal co-operation and networking. Soviet citizens, including those living in rural areas, developed and maintained informal social support networks which enabled them to cope with the command economy. Technological capital describes the mechanical equipment used by the household to produce food. The paper will first describe the context of the rayony, in terms of their economic conditions, next the methods used during the research, then the resources being utilised to achieve subsistence in this context (land, labour, money, food, and firewood), and finally the process of rural depopulation and the associated erosion of social capital in two the villages which formed the basis of the study.

Context – economic conditions in the rayony

- 4 Kosinskiy and Krasnovisherskiy rayony lie in the north of Perm' oblast', Russian Federation (Figure 1). Their location is to the north of the longstanding settled and economically developed areas of the country, and remote from large industrial centres to the south. There are harsh climatic conditions, inimical to the expansion of agricultural activity, population density is extremely low, and the industrial base and transport network are underdeveloped in comparison with "core" areas. These are the problems for development of the region, identified as a high cost, remote area relative to more accessible and lower cost areas further south. Remoteness from the developed core is crucial, and it contributes to the marginality of the area.

Figure 1. European Russia showing the location of Perm' oblast' and the KPAO 200).

- 5 The rayony are part of the Russian "Near North". In the USSR, in an attempt to encourage workers to stay in, or to relocate to, areas of the Soviet North, the state designated an area the "administrative North". Workers here received wage increments and favourable treatment from the state. The North was divided into two parts; the Far North, covering the most northerly regions, above the Arctic Circle, and much of the Soviet Far East; and the near-North, closer to the core of the country. Wage increments were higher in the Far than in the Near North. Large scale settlement of the area took place during the 1930s, through the forced movement of kulaks and other exiles to the North.
- 6 The state's development strategy and pricing system did not incorporate the market costs of transportation, and northern regions were unable to develop large-scale processing industries linked to their industrial resource base, or to retain the profits extracted from their regions. The bias towards resource extraction is evident in the industrial structure of Kosinskiy and Krasnovisherskiy rayony, which were heavily weighted towards primary forestry production. Soviet economic policy demanded ever-increasing resource production regardless of its social or economic impact. It is now evident that this system promoted a scale and pattern of development in the Soviet north, including the north of Perm' oblast' that was not economically sustainable (Bradshaw, 1995, pp. 199- 202
- 7 Processes of political, economic and social transition in Russia have revealed the costs of this development strategy. As transformation of the economy takes place, market costs of development and transportation are apparent, and much of the economic activity of the north is no longer viable. A cost-price squeeze has taken place, wherein the liberalization of prices has seen raw material prices relatively depressed, while the cost of inputs (machinery, fuel, supplies infrastructure etc.) has risen steeply (Bradshaw, 1995, pp. 199-200).

- 8 As a result, the economic climates of Kosinskiy and Krasnovisherskiy rayony are characterized by falling production levels, rising debt and unemployment and increasing economic marginalisation. Low levels of production, and high levels of long term debt, are exhibited in both state and private spheres, and are evident almost across the board amongst branches of the economy. Difficult financial conditions have led to nonpayment of wages, loss of employment, as well as to hidden unemployment, and falling standards of services, while prices continue to rise.
- 9 Both rayony lie in the north of Perm' oblast'. Kosinskiy rayon (population 10,200³) is one of the six constituent parts of the Komi- Permyak Autonomous Okrug (KPAO), the poor economic conditions of which were highlighted in January 1998, when the second working session of the Legislative Assembly of the KPAO agreed that the inhabitants of the region, one of the most underdeveloped in European Russia, needed greater governmental assistance. The okrug has an under-performing agricultural sector, and its timber industry is in decline. Levels of healthcare, education and social services are below those of other regions. Life expectancies are 10-11 years lower in the okrug than Russia's average, and the population has been in decline for several decades. Timber enterprises have practically ceased operations, and collective farms have massive debts and produce little. Many employees have not been paid for three years, and many enterprises, if not already bankrupt, are on the brink. Official unemployment reached 19% by the end of 1997, but the real figures are likely to have been much higher. 82% of the okrug's budget comes from federal subsidies⁴.
- 10 The dominant industrial enterprise in Kosinskiy rayon is the Kosinskiy Leskhoz (forestry enterprise), which produces pinewood and spruce goods (sawtimber, pulpwood etc.). 32% of the population of the rayon is nominally employed in industry, and of those, 86% are nominally employed in forestry; the extent of hidden unemployment is such that figures are variable in their reliability, but the general picture is that most of the people "employed" in Kosinskiy rayon are foresters⁵.
- 11 Krasnovisherskiy rayon lies to the southeast of the KPAO, has a territory of 15,400 km², and a population of 30,900. The administrative centre, the town of Krasnovishersk, administers the 73 settlements in the rayon, some of which are 150- 170km from the centre. Half the rayon's territory is designated as being of primary importance for timber cutting; untapped forest resources occupy one third of the territory, which in total is 87% forested⁶.

Methodology and data sources

- 12 To collect the data necessary for this study, different methodologies were used. Three periods of three months" fieldwork in the Russian Federation facilitated extended periods of participant observation in the two villages of Solym and Vaya, and surrounding settlements. The periods spent in the villages were during late winter, early spring, and late summer. These seasons were chosen in order to observe the depletion of winter food stores, the spring sowing, the summer harvest, and methods used to preserve foods for winter storage. In the villages, a semi-structured questionnaire household survey was carried out, alongside a small number of in-depth interviews with key respondents. In addition, I worked in the Perm' State Archive to trace the history of settlement of the rayony, and the parallel history of development of the forestry industry, and also sourced

contemporary accounts of the collapse of the forestry industry from recent newspaper articles. Interviews with senior officials in Perm' Oblast' administration, and the rayon and sel'soviet administrations illuminated the policy of the oblast' towards its marginal regions, and the relationship between the oblast's policies and those of the federal government. All the interviews were carried out in Russian, and all the source material (statistical data from the rayony, oblast and federal administrations, archival data and press sources) were also in Russian.

Social capital and subsistence

Context

- 13 Inhabitants of forestry villages in these rayony face unemployment, non-payment of wages, and also reductions in the services to which had become accustomed during the Soviet period, leading to increased poverty and hardship. Before 1991, the leskhozi were not only the major employers in these villages, but also supplied the services upon which their workers and their families relied. For example, they usually funded the bathhouse, shop, village club, and maintained the houses in which their employees lived. After 1991, when the enterprises became joint-stock companies, the majority became bankrupt, unable to pay their workers, or to supply services to the villages. Housing stock ceased to be maintained, and services declined. In the mid-1990s, most leskhozi transferred responsibility for these amenities to the local authorities, which were scarcely better able to support them. As a result, the supply of services is extremely poor, with little hope of improvement. Living standards are very low, with no running water, or piped gas, and supplies of electricity and telephone services are unreliable.
- 14 Exchange relationships have been the subject of debate over recent decades. There have been two opposing views; on the one hand, it has been argued that the Soviet state succeeded in largely ridding the villages of networks for informal support, and on the other hand that the state itself created the need for the same informal networks.
- 15 The Soviet state aimed to centralise the production and delivery of goods and services, and virtually all households relied on the state for income (salaries, pensions, childcare), consumer goods, and most services, such as health, education and transport, with the result that a "dependent population", reliant for the majority of its everyday and long-term needs, was created. It was argued that such reliance on the state destroyed the significance, if not the total use of, informal networks for social support⁷. Traditional sources of support were no longer necessary because the state provided services which had previously been provided by family and community⁸. The role of political repression has also been implicated in terms of suspicion and distrust based upon fear of the secret police and informers, meaning that people were reluctant to trust family, friends and neighbours. The USSR's form of repression was seen to result in isolated individuals, and little integration into informal networks⁹. When resources and services were needed, they were obtained from formal, bureaucratic state sources rather than from informal ties. The counter to this argument for isolation and lack of informal networks is based upon the scarcity of goods and services, which was a notable feature of life in the USSR, and which continues to be crucial today¹⁰; this scarcity increased the size and significance of informal networks. Large and extensive networks were, and are, needed to access and obtain necessary goods and services¹¹.

The more a social system is bureaucratically formalised, regulated, planned, and yet unable to fully satisfy social requirements, the more it tends to create informal mechanisms that escape the control of the system. (Lomnitz, 1988, p. 43)

- 16 Scarcity of goods and services, and the centralisation of the few goods and services that there were, resulted in a social structure permeated with informal networks of support¹². The theory that the action of the Soviet state served to discourage the development of informal networks has limited relevance in Solym and Vaya.
- 17 Households usually consist of a family, usually nuclear, sometimes extended, living together and organised as a single unit for budgeting and consumption purposes and for the purposes of providing themselves with food and other domestic arrangements¹³. In the villages of the two rayony, households live in one-storey wooden houses, in their own plot of land, comprising a potato patch, a vegetable garden, and a hayfield. Sometimes households also have access rights to hayfields separate from their kitchen gardens. Located on the household plot are various outbuildings, such as a barn, for livestock, with a hayloft, a wooden banya, for washing, a hut for the drop toilet, and a wooden shelter for firewood.

Land

- 18 Land is the basic essential. From its own land the household obtains the greater part of its subsistence. In Vaya, all land belongs to the leskhoz, which ploughs the inhabitants' plots, and collects rental payment of 25 kopecks per year. In Solym, the land in the village itself is administered by the village soviet of nearby Svetlitsa. The forest surrounding the village is the responsibility of the local leskhoz.

Labour

- 19 Labour requirements of households are usually fulfilled by their own members, sometimes with the help of the extended family. Shanin (1990) calls this the "family production unit", with the absence (or limited use) of wage labour, and the increased importance of family-centred consumption, the mutual, non-contractual, and longterm support labour relationships. For example, in Vaya and Solym, incidences of adult children, married and living apart from their parents' household, helping at haymaking time in return for milk and/or bread from their parents are very common. All members of the household play a part in the collection and cultivation of food. Children help in the collection of berries and mushrooms, and often clean and pick through the berries before preserving. They also help to harvest crops from the garden, and are sent on errands to collect milk and bread from other households. Adult labour is deployed in the hayfields, and in the kitchen garden, with women's labour also utilised in the home, where they are responsible for preparing food, and also for making the various preserves which the household stores for winter, as well as laundry and cleaning. Men additionally undertake hunting and fishing trips, being absent sometimes for days at a time. They also take responsibility for the butchery of domestic animals, and they cut firewood.

Money

- 20 Although households provide for most of their own needs, they still need money, to pay land rent, to buy food and goods they cannot produce themselves, and to buy vegetable seeds for their gardens. The major sources are wages, pensions and benefits, and revenue from domestic products sold on the local market. (A complication is the fact that under circumstances such as those being experienced in these two rayony, vodka is being used as a direct substitute for cash, a trend pointed out by Ioffe and Nefedova (1997)). Dealing first with money wages, state sector employees receive the most reliable payments, according to local opinion, although this income is still comparatively unreliable; if paid at all, wages are delayed, and some are paid in kind.
- 21 Some state sector employees, such as those employed by the local leskhozi, receive a different form of payment:
- Instead of money, people receive flour, and sacks of peas, from the local forestry enterprise, and they also get tickets which they can exchange for wood. They make bread from the flour, rather than buying it from the bakery¹⁴.
- 22 Both village inhabitants and regional administrators generally agree that the major source of cash income into rural areas is state pensions. Of Solym's total population of 287 (July 1997), 102 received a state pension, for old age, orphan status, invalidity or a number of other reasons. Pensions are more reliable than state sector wages, and they form a very important part of households' income, both for the household of the pensioners, and for those nearby. In extended families, the pension of a grandparent is often the financial "safety net" for the household.
- 23 With regard to unemployment benefit, payments are both smaller and less reliable. In Krasnovisherskiy rayon, for example, although there are various different levels of unemployment benefit, calculated on the basis of wages previously received, in summer of 1997, all claimants received the minimum, and in Kosinskiy rayon at the same time, the unemployed had ceased to register their status because benefit was simply not being paid¹⁵. Households were also entitled to child benefit of 70 rubles per child per month, which in August 1997 in Kosinskiy rayon had not been received since January of that year¹⁶. Although the payment itself is unreliable, an important distinction must still be made between those households with children and those without; child benefit is used to pay dues on land, to settle bills and debts (repayment of loans is often promised on the receipt of child benefit), and to buy food.
- 24 The third source of money is revenue from gathered foods or domestic produce sold on the local market. Most households collect wild fruits, nuts, mushrooms and so on as a source of food for themselves, but others rely on the sale of such goods for money. Within villages, the wealthier households are targeted as potential buyers of fresh fish, wild berries and mushrooms, as poorer inhabitants sell "doorto- door". Some travel to local highways to sell to passing motorists. In Kosinskiy rayon, inhabitants of Solym also travel by bus to the rayon centre of Kosa to sell berries. Sale of milk, sour cream and cottage cheese makes a cow a potential source of income. Apart from selling foodstuffs, households also sell labour in return for cash, offering work in the hayfields or in the kitchen garden of another household.
- 25 Equal in importance with the sources of money are the ways in which it is spent, the goods which are purchased, and the amount of money which is required to satisfy certain

obligations. Land rent is nominal, but there are additional charges levied on rural dwellers. For example, there are the taxes on various forms of transport, such as cars, freight vehicles, motorcycles, and boats with outboard motors¹⁷. Apart from these taxes, the overwhelming expenditure of money in both villages is on food. Every respondent spent between 90 and 100% of their cash on food, with any surplus spent on other essentials. Typical responses were:

- Food. I can't afford to buy anything else at all¹⁸.
- Food. Anything left over goes on clothes¹⁹.
- Food, then spending on the animals²⁰. Just food²¹.
- All of it goes on food²².
- Almost all on food. The rest goes to my daughter at college²³.

Food

Domestic Production

- ²⁶ Food comes from a range of sources; domestic production, barter, purchase, gift giving, collection, and as payment, with production constituting by far the most important source. The typical household has a kitchen garden, with potatoes, carrots, beetroot, cabbages, marrows, peas, garlic, tomatoes, and cucumbers, herbs such as flat-leaved parsley, fennel and horseradish, and soft fruits such as raspberries, and both alpine and cultivated strawberries. Seeds are purchased from local markets or by post, or are saved from the previous year's crop. The agricultural calendar differs between Kosinskiy and Krasnovisherskiy rayony, because of the differences in climate between the two areas. Kosinskiy rayon's climate is the less severe, although both face major drawbacks for agriculture²⁴. However, despite climatic limitations, households are able to provide themselves with ample potatoes and root vegetables for winter; although yields vary, there is always enough. Most households keep livestock, usually pigs, for meat, sometimes a cow, to provide milk for dairy products, and also to produce calves for meat. Animals require a considerable amount of attention; cows, goats, sheep and sometimes also pigs are allowed to wander in the villages, grazing and foraging at the side of the roads, and at the edge of the forest, but for 8 months of the year they must be stall-fed, and hay is required. Since domestic production must feed the members of the household throughout the year, various methods of storage and preservation of seasonal foods are employed. Root vegetables and potatoes are kept in a cellar beneath the house, protected from frost. Cabbage is preserved with salt, cucumbers and tomatoes are preserved with herbs and garlic, and herbs themselves are also preserved. Soft fruits are preserved as varenia, (jam), or as compote, a form of fruit juice. Meat is preserved by freezing (in ice-lined pits), salting or smoking.

Gift giving

- ²⁷ Sources of barter, gift giving, and exchange of food are various. "The gift" and "commodity exchange" can be seen as neatly opposing each other in a number of ways; in gift exchange, inalienable objects, of the same kind, pass between people already bound together by social ties whilst in commodity exchange, alienable objects, of different kinds, pass between people acting as free agents. Gift exchange underwrites social relations and is concerned with social reproduction, commodity exchange establishes relations

between things and ensures their reproduction. This counterposition of gift and commodity exchange as a binary pair is in contrast with Sahlin's conception of them as being opposite ends of a continuum; from the positive altruism of what he calls "generalised reciprocity" to the "unsociable extreme" of "negative reciprocity", the latter being exemplified by barter, chicanery and haggling (Sahlins, 1972, p. 200). In the study area the most common examples of barter are amongst kin, such as when dairy products from a cow kept by one household of a family are given in exchange for labour in the hayfields from other households of the family. In this way, a long-term exchange relationship is formed, whereby one "payment" of labour at haymaking time is made in exchange for daily milk, weekly sour cream, and so on. Between non-kin households, the purchase of milk often takes the form of a cash payment for each delivery, but in all cases, the arrangement is made according to the needs and resources of the participating households - as well as cash, the purchasing household might offer the use of its banya, or some of the fish caught during the summer months. Market exchange is carried out in village shops and bakeries, where households buy goods they cannot produce themselves, such as flour, rice, cereals and tinned fish and meat, as well as luxuries such as chocolate and fresh fruit. The range of products on sale in the two villages is limited; chicken is the only fresh meat available, and usually only one brand of each product is offered. Bread is an example of a foodstuff involved in a variety of exchange relationships. Vaya and Solym have village bakeries, and some inhabitants buy bread for their own consumption and to feed their animals. However, an increasing number of households either buy flour to bake their own bread, or engage in exchange relationships with other households: one household buys flour and "gives" it to another household, which keeps the flour to bake bread for itself, and also bakes for the first household. A further permutation arises when employees of failing enterprises are paid in flour rather than cash, enabling them to bake bread rather than buy it. Baking bread is considered to be more than buying it. Gift giving is a more kin-based system, in which participants bring gifts of produce from their gardens, such as the first or last crop of strawberries, or home-produced foods with some special significance, such as 208 Forestry villages in the Russian North as blini (pancakes) during Lent, or sweetened breads at Easter. Purchased "luxury" foods are also given as gifts, such as chocolate or biscuits to children and grandparents, and fresh fruit to family members who are ill.

Wild foods – deploying environmental resources

- 28 Most households collect wild foods from the forest, mainly berries and mushrooms, and most also fish and hunt. The rights of Soviet citizens to collect the "fruits of the forest" were clarified in 1978, in the Fundamental Principles of Forestry Legislation of the USSR and Union Republics. Article 35 stated that "Citizens shall have the right to freely stay in forests, gather wild fruit, nuts, mushrooms, berries and so forth". In the same document, the forests were declared "state ownership, the common property of the whole Soviet people". This law was updated in 1997, and now states that:

Citizens have the right to enter the territory of the forest... without payment, and to collect, strictly for necessity, wild fruits, berries, nuts, mushrooms, and other edible forest resources, medicinal plants and raw materials, to take part in cultural, keep-fit, tourist and sporting activities, and to hunt, according to the legislation of the Russian Federation. (Lesnoi Kodeks, 1997, p. 44)

- 29 At least twelve types of berries, and at least eight different mushrooms are collected, and many are preserved for winter.
- 30 Fishing is most productive in warmer months, but even when rivers and lakes are frozen, holes are cut in the ice for line fishing. In Vaya, the proximity of the River Vishera means that fish is an important source of protein, and cash. Fish is preserved either by drying or salting, and is often sold to other households, often those in villages further from the river.

Seasonal availability of food

- 31 The highly seasonal climate is reflected in the patterns of food availability. Also, between Solym and Vaya there is variation in the frequency of consumption of various foods. As part of a survey, respondents were asked approximately how often they ate a range of foods, including domestic produce, and foods they could either only purchase, or only obtain through hunting or fishing. In both villages, potatoes were eaten every day, with carrots, beetroot and onions, the other major vegetable crops, being consumed almost as regularly. Bread, milk, butter, and tea were also daily fare. Other staples such as rice, and various types of cereals known collectively as kasha were consumed between once and five times each week. Perishable garden produce, such as cucumbers and tomatoes, was eaten approximately fortnightly on average across the year, but almost daily in summer, with mushrooms falling into the same category. Every respondent reported eating berries in the form of jam on a daily basis, which is testament to the importance of the forest as the major source of fruit. The main difference between the two villages was in the consumption of purchased fresh fruit, such as apples, pears, bananas and oranges. In Vaya, apples were usually eaten monthly (more frequent consumption was only for the children), oranges and pears 2-5 times per year if at all, and bananas almost never. Some families reported never eating any of these fruits. Purchased fruit is regarded as a luxury, as are products such as cocoa (hot chocolate drinks), consumed yearly, or only for celebrations, and chocolate, between fortnightly and never. When asked about the consumption of vodka, most people answered that they only drank vodka for celebrations, but the implication was that the frequency of celebrations requiring vodka was greater than that of those requiring cocoa.
- 32 In Solym, although a very similar picture of consumption of staple foods applies, there was a difference in the pattern of consumption of purchased fruit. Apples and oranges were more commonly eaten, and sometimes watermelons and even pineapples were brought from the city, or if available, from the neighbouring village of Kosa, where there is a cluster of market stalls. The most likely explanation for the difference in patterns of consumption of "luxury" items between Solym and Vaya seems to be the difference in proximity to a bigger settlement, or more importantly, the ease of travel between them. Solym is one hour by twice-weekly bus from Kosa, whereas Vaya is 5 hours by once weekly bus from Krasnovishersk, both journeys crossing a river either by means of a temporary bridge, or by virtue of the vehicle being able to drive through the stream. Although Krasnovishersk is larger than Kosa, the difficulty, and cost of transporting goods from Krasnovishersk to Vaya means that once they arrive in Vaya they are expensive, and people cannot afford to buy them. This deduction is confirmed by responses from the questionnaires, with people giving very similar replies to the question of whether there were foods available in village shops, which they could not afford to

buy. In the context of general complaints that everything is far too expensive, the most frequently mentioned items were fruit, sweets and chocolate, biscuits, and sausages. The same story can be heard from a shopkeeper in Solym, who complained that when he purchased sausage for his shop, it was too expensive for local people, and since the shop had no refrigerator, it sat on the counter until it was rotten. The proximity to the larger settlement is also important because it is simply easier for the inhabitants of Solym to visit Kosa than it is for those living in Vaya to visit Krasnovishersk.

- 33 Although the range of foods potentially available is limited by seasonality, the expenditure of cash income on food did not appear to vary accordingly. A few households claimed to spend more in summer, a few said they spend more in winter, but the majority said expenditure in all seasons was the same. A likely reason for this seems to be the nature of the foods that are purchased; flour, rice, cereals and tea are all products which cannot be produced at home in this climate, which is also the case for the luxury items such as fruits and chocolate. In summary, since the purchased foods are primarily those which cannot be produced at home, expenditure on food does not exhibit strong seasonality.

Firewood

- 34 In the two rayony, the major vegetation type is forest, and the main industry is timber cutting. In the domestic economy also, timber is vitally important. Wooden houses are heated by wood-burning stoves, as is the water for the banya, and households without canister gas cook on wood stoves. The typical household burns between 10 and 15 cubic metres of firewood each year. It is possible to collect wood from the forest, but only fallen timber, and only with the permission of the leskhoz; most purchase it directly from the enterprise. Prices vary both geographically and according to the status of the buyer. For example, in Solym in 1998, "cut" timber (i.e. tree trunks already sawn into manageable lengths) and full trunks were offered at a lower price to workers in the forestry enterprise than to those outside it²⁵. Forestry workers often receive a "ticket" entitling them to a specified amount of timber, in lieu of wages, and households with little money come to arrangements with pensioners and other households, and in Solym they supplement their purchased timber with gathered wood from where the forest encroaches onto land administered by the sel'soviet.

Rural depopulation and the erosion of social capital

- 35 Social capital and the exchange networks it supports are crucial to subsistence in the villages of Solym and Vaya. Rural depopulation in Russia was identified as a major problem during the Soviet period, but since 1991 it has become more marked, with northern rural areas losing population at a high rate. For example, two regions located in the far northeast of Russia, bordering on Alaska, have lost significant shares of their population; Magadan has lost a third of its population to emigration in the 1990s, while Chukotka has lost nearly half²⁶. Table 1 shows the migration figures for Kosinskiy rayon in the mid-to-late 1990s.
- 36 Although these figures may seem small, their effect is great. The loss of population from small villages reduces the density of social networks supporting local households, and affects the ability of the households to support themselves. However, apart from the practical impacts of depopulation, there are implications related to the roles previously played by the people who have left. For instance, in order to leave a village, a household

must be able to support itself financially, meaning that it must have good prospects of employment. It is usually the case that the first people to leave the marginal villages are those with employable skills, such as teachers. The effect on the village of the loss of teachers is not simply that of a missing link in the exchange network, but of long-term marginalisation of the village. As teachers leave, the resource base of village schools is compromised, with the remaining teachers taking lessons for subjects in which they are not qualified. Long term effects on the children are obvious, particularly in terms of foreign languages; students without qualifications in a foreign language face difficulties when applying to university. In addition, the process of leaving a village, finding a job elsewhere and a flat in which to live relies on friends (or friends of friends) outside offering help and sometimes temporary accommodation. Without such networks, families face great difficulties. When a household leaves the village, therefore, they take with them the links they have maintained with friends in towns and cities, and often with their departure the outside link is broken. These households which aspire to leaving the village are usually those which keep a telephone, to maintain their contacts, and this also is a link to the outside world which can be broken. An alternative strategy to outmigration is household bifurcation, where one or more members of the household leaves the village to find work elsewhere, leaving others behind to tend the household plot. Money and food are exchanged between the two, and the kitchen garden acts as a safety net for the household members employed elsewhere. This strategy was employed by a family from Solym, and proved critical for their welfare. They had begun to purchase a flat in the city of Perm', but after the August 1998 crash, the vendor of the flat decided to withdraw from the transaction, and refunded the payments they had made, by then dramatically devalued by inflation. The family had no option but to return to the village they had recently left.

Summary

- 37 This paper has sought to describe the survival economy within two forestry villages in the Russian Near North. Pallot and Moran (2000) have discussed this concept within the wider context of local, regional and federal policy, and this paper expands upon the themes of subsistence, and the use of environmental, and social capital. The collapse of the forestry industry in the north of Perm' oblast' has precipitated the decline in the local economy, and has led to isolation and marginalisation of villages in this area. Marginalisation can be argued to be taking place in the economic, political and social spheres, as people become increasingly reliant upon their own domestic and environmental resources, and as they become less and less able to leave the villages in which they live. Rural depopulation compounds the problem, with the loss of population adversely affecting the social networks crucial to subsistence. Since the young and skilled are those most likely to be able to leave, as marginalisation takes place against the backdrop of transition, there is a risk that rural poverty will become pensioners' poverty, despite the fact that pensioners are among the small number of people with reliable financial incomes.

Table 1. Migration balance of Kosinskiy rayon, 1994-96.

	1994	1995	1996
January	-1	0	+1
February	-19	+3	+1
March	+8	-1	+4
April	+16	-13	+12
May	+8	-1	-1
June	-1	-4	0
July	-11	+9	+7
August	-25	-33	-15
September	-36	-44	-44
October	-7	-25	-22
November	-10	-19	-3
December	+1	+2	0
Net Figures	-77	-126	-60

Source: V.I. Kuznetsova, Director Kosinskoye Otdela Statistiki, Kosa, Kosinskiy rayon

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7. Anderson, quoted on Wolfe, in Dershem (1998), op. cit.
8. Walder (1986), in Dershem (1998), op. cit., p.13.
9. Feher, Heller and Markus (1983), in Dershem (1998), op. cit.
10. Whereas during the Soviet period, lack of goods and services can be seen as a function of the command-administrative system, in the post-Soviet period, in the study region, it is largely a function of the poor accessibility of the area and the low levels of income received by inhabitants.
11. Eisenstadt & Roninger (1981), Willerton (1979), Simis (1982), Sik (1988), all in Dershem (1998), op. cit.
12. Morton (1984), Walder (1986), Lomnitz (1988), all in Dershem (1998), op. cit.
13. The extended family is defined by Laslett (1972) to be a Conjugal Family Unit (CFU) i.e. a married couple, a married couple with offspring, or a widowed person with offspring, with the addition of one or more relatives other than the offspring. If the resident relative is of an earlier generation than that of the CFU, then the extension is said to be upwards. The presence of a grandchild, nephew or niece creates downward extension, and that of a brother, sister or cousin of the couple implies sideways extension. In this definition, the term "extended family" covers all relatives in habitual contact with a person, irrespective of whether they live with him or her. The majority of the extended families in the study area were extended upwards, with the presence of parents of the couple.
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20. pers comm Tatiana Ivanovna Andrukova, Vaya July 1997.
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ABSTRACTS

This paper focuses on conditions in forestry villages in the northern rayony of Perm' oblast', in European Russia, which form part of the Russian "Near North". It describes the collapse of the local forestry economy after 1991, and against the backdrop of these economic conditions, the paper then discusses the survival strategies being employed by the inhabitants of the villages of these rayony, such as outmigration, household bifurcation, use of domestic and environmental resources, and the importance of social capital. The paper draws some conclusions about the interplay between rural depopulation, social capital, and marginalisation in villages in these northern rayony.

Cet article analyse la situation de villages forestiers dans la région nord de l'oblast de Perm (Russie d'Europe), qui font partie du "Proche-Nord" russe. Il décrit l'effondrement de l'économie forestière locale après 1991 et examine les stratégies de survie mises en œuvre dans ce contexte économique par les habitants des villages de ces régions, telles que l'émigration, la bifurcation des ménages, l'utilisation des ressources domestiques et environnementales, ainsi que l'importance du capital social. Il se termine par quelques conclusions sur l'interaction entre dépopulation rurale, capital social et marginalisation dans les villages de ces régions septentrionales.

INDEX

Mots-clés: transition post-soviétique, stratégies de survie, dépopulation rurale, capital social

200 Forestry villages in the Russian North

Keywords: post-Soviet transition, survival strategies, rural depopulation, social capital

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