

# Research of Economic Space: Approaches of Russian Scholars

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## ABSTRACT

The paper focuses on the evolution of views on the notions of “space” and “economic space”, and gives assessment to some Russian scholarly approaches to the category of “economic space”. Based on the synthesis of both, there was suggested an authorly classification of the theoretical approaches to exploring economic space which is well-established in the Russian economic science. The article offers treatments of economic space highlighted by the authors within each approach. There have been considered scientific views of some Russian scholars on the structure and components of economic space. The economic space as a complex category has not been given a mono-semantic interpretation in economic publications. An attempt to generalize a variety of views allowed the authors to suggest their own classification of approaches to the economic space research and to single out the territorial, resource, information, process, subject-object, institutional and system approaches. In this article we show the works of leading Russian scientists in the field of economic theory and in the field of applying economic theory, where it was shown that during the entire period of development of the economic space, Russia progressed on all its economic prostration, which makes the country independent in many branches of production and technology.

**Keywords:** Space, economic space, Russian experience.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The large-scale research of economic space in its diversity started in the 1970-80s is still on. Numerous publications devoted to the subject of economic space give evidence that this category is debatable and controversial; it proves that there is no single approach to its treatment. The authors have made an attempt to generalize the existing theoretical views on the nature of the concept of “economic space”.

Before defining what economic space is, one should make it clear what basically space is. The notion of “space” is broadly employed in different sciences that include it in their conceptual construct to be used as a tool for constructing their own domains and theories. This category is quite complex with a long history of comprehension.

The evolution of views on the essence of space is associated with the names of Aristotle, Plato, Euclid, Herodotus, Democritus, Leucippus, Epicurus, Lucretius, Plotinus, Aquinas F., Bruno J., Descartes, Newton, Leibniz, Kant, et. al. Every other round of social development added its own features in the comprehension of the category of “space”. In ancient philosophy, space was associated with such concepts as place, form, proportion, symmetry, harmony, etc. For Aristotle “space without material objects has no independent significance” (Kochetkov & Phedotov, 2012). Democritus (followed by Leucippus, Epicurus, Lucretius) considered space as a repository of an aggregate of atoms (the tiny particles of matter), which, being tightly packed, in turn, form all things existent (Karpenko, 2002).

## 2. THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

Classical physics endues space with such properties as three-dimensionality, homogeneity, isotropy, continuity, infinity, absolute metric properties (Lebedev, 2006). “According to the concepts of absolute space by Newton, <...> space – is an independent entity, unaffected by the included objects or the on-going processes in it” (Kochetkov & Phedotov, 2012). In the view of Leibniz G., space is an order of coexistence, “... space is neither a substance, nor an absolute being, but, like time, it is a certain order”.

Animitsa Ye. and Suhikh V. emphasize that at present there is no universally accepted generalizing theory of time and space in physics; and the theory of relativity, like any scientific theory, is not a fully comprehensive doctrine of the category concerned (Animitsa & Suhikh, 2007).

The analysis of works by Bondyрева S., and Kolesov D. exploring the concept of “space” allows to come to the conclusion that, in expressing the essence of space they operate the notions of emptiness, filling emptiness with the matter, adopting by emptiness the extension of the matter, discontinuity, converting emptiness into space, coordinality (relative position of components), borders, places, feeling of spatiality, a form of all the phenomena, the order of objects existence, spatiality, distance, etc. (Bondyрева & Kolesov, 2004)

Given the category of “space” is universal, it is endowed with certain fundamental meanings, that can be revealed through a historic-intentional analysis. We agree with Kochelaevskaya K., who singles out the three main semantic layers in the notion of space presented in the traditional philosophical concepts (space as place, space as an order of mutual existence, space as a way of world comprehension), which, in our view, may be in an appropriate way interpreted in economic science as well.

1. Space as place, a container, as something all-embracing. Philosophically, space here is viewed as an objective reality, not affecting the world objects, but allowing them to exist in a specific way. Economic space, in this sense, is a physical basis, a certain territory (the extent of which can be varied), within which there is distribution of productive forces and a purposeful economic activity.
2. Space as an order of mutual existence. In terms of philosophy, space is comprehended through the material objects interrelations. In this sense, economic space is multi-ordinal, since economic

objects and economic activity may be structured on different grounds: by economic activity, according to organizational and legal aspects, by a size of enterprises (micro, small, medium-sized and large), by a form of ownership, etc.

3. Space as a way of world comprehension, as a form of human consciousness, as an intention, endowing objects with spatial properties. Economic space in this sense may be presented as a form of organizing a conscious human activity of a rational character, in the process of which there take place formation and implementation of industrial relations.

A generalizing analysis of the views of Russian scholars to the economic space allows to conclude that different scientific approaches are existing.

Surnina N. categorizes sociological, globalistic, geopolitical (geostrategic), cognitive, geocultural (intercultural, ethno-economic, neo-economic, culturalogical), geo-information, geo-economic, geo-ecological, civilization, (evolutionary, cyclic), geo-urbanistic, and geo-systemicmacro-approaches (Surnina, 2003).

Animitsa Ye. and Suhikh V. completed the list of theoretical approaches by the economic activity approach, process approach, and institutional approach (Animitsa & Suhikh, 2007).

Biyakov O., examining the views of modern economists to the category of “economic space” lists the three key approaches: a resource-based approach, territorial approach and information approach (Biyakov, 2004). Some other scholars, Mitrophanov A. (Mitrophanov, 2013), Semak Ye. (Semak, 2013), Zakharov S. (Zakharov, 2016) share the view.

Karimov A. and Chuvashaeva E., after generalizing the existing views on approaches to the study of economic space, come to the conclusion that it is necessary to single out a territorial, resource-based, information, and process approach (Karimov & Chuvashaeva, 2014).

Voloshina A. notes that the exploration of economic space by Russian researchers is mainly carried out in the framework of the territorial, resource-based, factorial and information concepts (Voloshina, 2013).

Apart from the above-mentioned, Ekova V. completes the list of theoretical approaches with the object-subject, institutional, process and evolution-genetic ones (Ekova, 2012). Whereas Korabeynikov I. suggests socio-economic and object approaches (Korabeynikov, 2015).

The viewpoint of Inshakov O. and Phrolov D. also seems to be of interest. They assume that in economic space there are the six component-factors: human, technical, natural, institutional, organizational and informational (Inshakov & Phrolov, 2005).

Summarizing the above views on the scientific approaches of studying economic space of a region, we should delineate a group of basic approaches, which includes territorial, resource-based, information and process approaches, as well as a group of additional (subordinate) approaches, the application of which can be driven by specific exploration objectives. Below there are given characteristics of the basic theoretical approaches to the definition of “economic space”.

A *territorial approach* is the most common approach in the economic science, which uses, as a basic determinant, the concept of “territory” in determining the economic space. It is also based on the identification of geographic qualities (criteria) in the economic processes development. The classical definition of economic

space in the framework of the territorial approach was given by Granberg A. According to Granberg A. “economic space – is a replete area, accommodating a variety of objects and inter-connections: inhabited localities, industrial enterprises, economically-developed territories and recreation territories, transportation and utility systems, etc.” (Granberg, 2004).

Minakir P., who explores in-depth the theoretical aspects of economic space, gives the following definition: “... spatial economics is a form of economy existence, as a set of interacting economic agents, distributed in a geographic space in a certain way” (Minakir, 2014), at that economic space is not homogeneous. “There are “conglomerations” of economic activity which tend to arise in locations with the better favourable geographic, climate and resource conditions for its implementation” (Minakir, 2014).

Malakhova O. also adheres to the territorial approach and defines economic space as “a certain geographic area, confined by economic or other benefits of people consuming goods and services produced in the area in question” (Malakhova, 2009).

Within the territorial approach, the concepts of “space” and “territory” are often assumed identical. Correlating the notion of space, territory and district, Kostinsky G. states: “An area is a specific set of locations resulted from their combining/ grouping and aggregating based on a sole principle. A district, however, is something that definitely stands out, being singled out of the whole object” (Kostinsky, 1992). Leizerovich Ye. classifies such types of space as: ill-organized and highly-organized space; as “areas within which the mutual spatial arrangement of any emerging objects is predetermined by the previous development or by a set of fixed rules” (Leizerovich, 1995).

**Table 1**  
**Treatment of the concept “economic space” within the territorial approach**

<i>Author</i>	<i>Definition of Economic Space</i>
Granberg A.	“Economic space – is a replete area, accommodating a variety of objects and inter-connections: inhabited localities, industrial enterprises, economically-developed territories and recreation territories, transportation and utility systems, etc.” (Granberg, 2004).
Animitsa Ye. Surnina N.	“Economic space is a state territory within which there is established, used and reproduced a system of human vital functions, where activities of people are carried out aiming to satisfy their requirements. Broadly speaking, economic space encompasses land, internal and territorial waters (water areas) needed to keep up and improve the inhabitants’ conditions. In the narrow sense, economic space is an economically-developed area of a country, where there are carried out activities associated with production, distribution, exchange and consumption of goods and services” (Animitsa & Surnina, 2006).
Malakhova O.	Economic space is “a certain geographic area, confined by economic or other benefits of people consuming goods and services produced in the area in question” (Malakhova, 2009).
Shestakov R.	“Economic space can be defined as a certain extent of economic components bearing the indicators of location and time, and remaining independent from the on-going there economic processes and emerging phenomena. To a certain degree, economic space is identical to the notion of economic area, though the former renders a broader concept additionally embracing economic spheres, surroundings/ environment, a variety of economic relations, interactions and regularities. Economic area is connected with some geographical space and a political component such as sovereign administration” (Shestakov, 2010).
Mikhurinskaya Ye.	Economic space is “part of an inhabited territory enabling people, by exploiting the potential of the natural resources available on the territory, to fulfill the living purposes, thereby developing varied economic activities as well as creating conditions for the development of productive forces” (Mikhurinskaya, 2006).

A territorial approach makes it possible to consider economic space within certain geographic, national and other borders. Its basic parameter to define economic space is an area to place the productive forces and to carry out economic activities. As elements of space, one can consider macro-regions, regions, cities and economic regions, etc.

Number two in the list of basic approaches to giving a definition of economic space is a *resource-based approach*, the essence of which boils down to the identification as a key factor – determining an economic area – the availability of resources and relations pertaining to their use, distribution and redistribution.

Radayev V. speaks of economic space as “a set of economic efforts” (Radayev, 2002). The latter, in his view, implies “a non-forced use of limited resources for various applications aimed at meeting some quantified objectives associated with ensuring living activities” (Radayev, 2002). In the paper of Peftiev V., the author defines economic space through a system of relations on the use of economic resources (Peftiev, 2001).

Kutchin I. and Lebedev A. present economic space as “... a discrete distribution ... of raw materials sources, processing enterprises and markets to trade products” (Kutchin & Lebedev, 2001).

An extended interpretation of economic space viewed from the resource-based approach is given by Tchekmarev V. In his opinion, economic space is “space composed of: (a) individuals and legal entities (subjects) that enter into economic relations in order to meet their economic needs and economic interests determined by those needs; (b) physical and non-physical objects as a source of economic interests and economic relations” (Tchekmarev, 2001). As regards the sources of economic interests, they are the economic resources available.

The resource-based approach features a very specific phenomenon of “regional identity”, both material and non-material aspects of which are associated with the spatial distribution and development of regional socio-economic resources. According to Galazova S., regional identity is one of the spatial factors of economic development (Galazova, 2014).

Within the *information approach*, when identifying economic space, an information factor is considered to be a dominating one.

Parinov S. notes that economic space is formed by economic agents that exchange information. Syroyezhin I. considers economic space in terms of economic cybernetics, and focuses on the information exchange between the elements of the economic system (Syroyezhin, 1978; Syroyezhin, 1986).

Ivanov E. believes that economic space is formed by information flows that circulate between business entities and determine the structure of this space.

It should be mentioned that, at the present stage of the economic science development, the significance of an information factor in the economic activity is increasing. Information support and information service act as independent types of economic activity. At both regional and local levels an interaction of business entities with economic space is carried out, among other things, in the form of information exchange and integration into information flows.

Makar S., developing the idea of an information factor and its significance for economic space, suggests conceptualizing an *information-ecological approach*, the essence of which is to accumulate and synthesize the

knowledge about spatial layers – sub-areas – with the focus on the benefits of an environmental approach, i.e. based on exploring consequences of developing relations between spatial elements and structures. These relations can be classified as homogeneous and heterogeneous. The scholar defines space itself as a system structure composed of cells, the latter being able to implement an individual development program. The ecological component routes the research to the analysis and evaluation of how each structural cell of space interacts with different cells and with structural arrangements similar to itself. The information component allows to track and analyze the presence and nature of interactions and interrelations between structural cells of space as well as individual spatial structures (objects, projects, environments, processes) (Makar, 2012).

A *process approach* to the research of a regional economic space was suggested by Biyakov O. He defines economic space as “a relationship between business entities’ economic processes and an aggregate economic process (V-process) for generating likely outcomes of economic activity” (Biyakov, 2004). The elements of economic space are an economic process, economic time, economic competition.

Tchernetsova N. considers economic space as a system of “interconnections of external, ordering factors; internal, organizing factors of business entities’ economic activity and the ensuring those driving forces in the socio-ecosystems “nature – individual – community” (Tchernetsova, 2006).

In the framework of the *process approach* Zvyagintseva O. treats economic space as a system, the levels of which “to a different extent, are filled with the actual economic systems, the ways they interact, and the on-going – inside them – economic processes reflecting their economic relations... In other words, economic space is filled with the mechanisms for the reproduction of economic benefits adequate to the human needs, to their structure and content” (Zvyagintseva, 2004).

In terms of the content the *subject-object approach* is close to the process approach.

The subject-object approach defines economic space as a set of economic relations between economic agents. The subject-object approach allows to focus on the interactions in the economy of the region as well as ways, forms, and instruments of the economic interactions implementation.

This approach is similar to the treatment of economic space by Tatarkin A. and Lavrikova Yu.: “We treat economic space as a combination of an area as a physical foundation for the productive forces arrangement and an established socio-economic environment, in which there takes place a socially significant interaction of business entities. Based on the above-given definition, economic space, in its form, appears to be a network structure of interactions arising from the economic activity of business entities” (Tatarkin & Lavrikova, 2011).

The economic space research has found its further development in the *institutional approach* suggested by some others Russian scholars. The institutional approach organizes space of economic life by appropriate rules, standards, requirements, traditions, compulsory actions, and restrictions of certain “rules of the game” (Nort, 1997). Given the vast territory of Russia, institutionalization of economic space tends to be a sort of a linking factor enabling to unite separate areas and regions through some links, relations, interactions, procedures, social and other standards.

Inshakov O. and Phrolov D. point out that “in the context of evolutionary economics, the concept of space itself can be reconceived as a specific institution, i.e. a specific form of localizing people’s functions

which grants them a status and determines their being and consciousness” (Inshakov & Phrolov, 2007). Economic space is characterized by institutionality, which is manifested in certain contradictions between the needs of economic activity agents to carry out their social functions (institutions) and the possibilities to satisfy them. Inshakov O. and Phrolov D. come to the conclusion that the content of the institutional space is determined by social relations between people as actors of some institutions and agents of the relevant bodies. These relations institutionalize individuals’ activities according to the existing status and the status-related functions, they fulfill, to the established norms, customs, values and practices as well as adopted rules and procedures. That is an internal institutional content of economic space as a whole (Inshakov & Phrolov, 2007).

Viewed from the *institutional approach* does Smagina V. define the essence of a national economic space. In her opinion, a national economic space is an institution intended to protect national production and domestic market against some negative influence from outside. “This institution aims at a considerable improvement of external economic relations and includes a set of agents’ transactions, revenue from the sale of the right to property which promotes a growth of the national wealth and ensures an upward tendency of the macroeconomic indicators. A territory of the national economic space is determined as a break of transactions or reduction of the transactions intensity” (Smagina, 2012)

The definition of regional economic space in the context of the institutional approach was suggested by Bagautdinova N. and Gafurov I.: “Regional economic space is a set of transactions, singled out territorially, within which economic agents (households, businesses, local community) exercise the legal power of ownership for the factors and outcomes of production, that, in its turn, promotes their interests” (Bagautdinova & Gafurov, 2012).

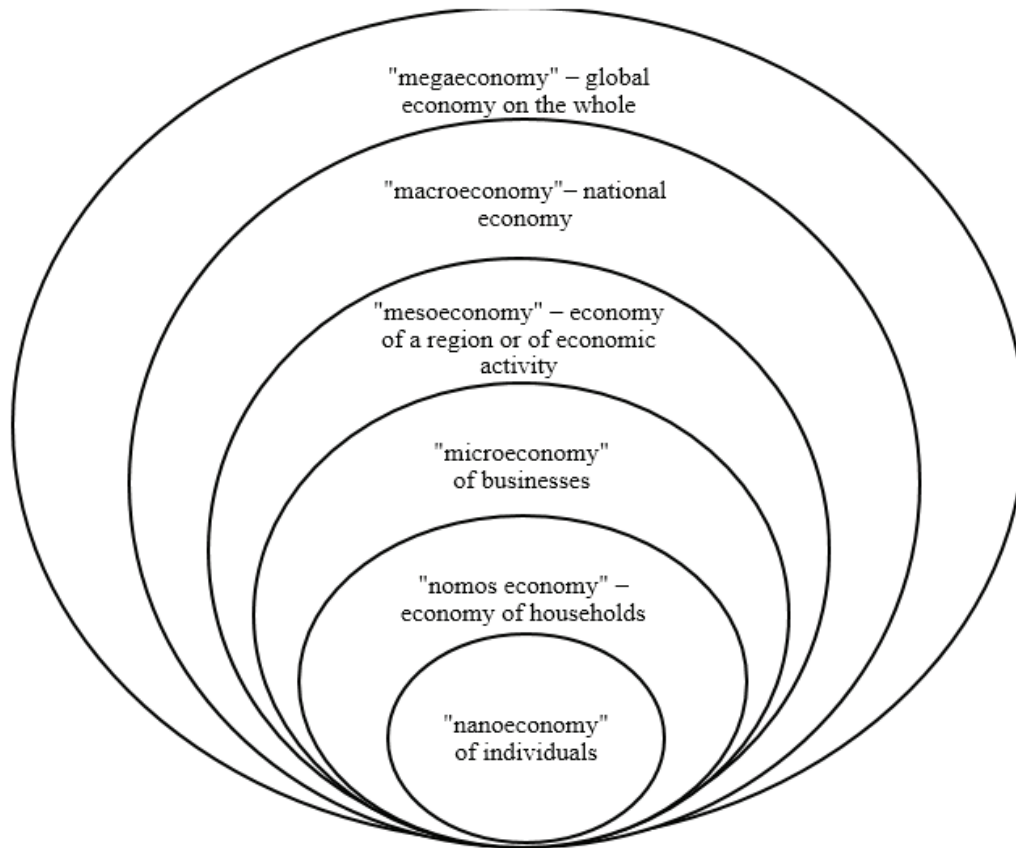
Unlike the institutional approach, the system approach to the economic space exploration failed to be given proper development in the works of Russian scholars. In terms of the system approach, knowledge concerning the varied processes, occurring within an economic area, is tied into a single, integral knowledge; economic area being considered as a complex system.

According to Belousova S.: “... socio-economic space is a complicated, living, dynamic system – the components of which being balanced or imbalanced - driven by a permanent search for the optimal choice between contradictions and confrontation of interests, parties, goals, etc. The main characteristics of such space are the following: high dimensionality; a large number of different interrelated subsystems with local objectives; multi-contour control; hierarchical structure; a significant retardment of coordinating effects with the elements of high dynamics; incomplete determinacy of the elements state; polyarchy of considerations...” (Belousova, 2014).

In the works of Akerman S., Mikhhalchuk A., Trifonov A., economic area is considered as a “self-organizing, complex dynamic system, evolutionizing in the course of its interaction with the environment”.

Within the system approach, the structure of economic space proposed by Tchekmarev V. (Tchekmarev, 2001) seems quite appropriate (Figure 1).

Each type of “economy” shown in Figure 1 relates to a particular space. Besides, there exist inter-level links built up in accordance with the commonly accepted principles of the political and economic behavior of the subjects.



**Figure 1: Structure of economic space as a multi-tier system (Tchekmarev, 2001)**

The works of Savchenko Ye. also describe economic space using the principles stated by the general systems theory. He proposed the following definition: “economic space is a combination of a territory as a physical basis for the distribution of productive forces and the established socio-economic environment where certain economic activity is carried out alongside with development and implementation of production and reproduction relations” (Savchenko, 2015).

The author accentuates economic activity, since this allows to classify interactions, arising within productive relations, as: spatial interactions relating to economic activity resources; spatial interactions in production process; spatial interactions with regard to the economic activity outcome (Savchenko, 2016).

In the structure of economic space it is also possible to distinguish certain subspaces (social, physical, technological, informational), sectors (non-financial corporations, financial corporations, public administration, households, non-profit institutions serving households), hierarchical levels (national, regional economic spaces, etc.).

### 3. CONCLUSION

Up to now, economic space as a complex category has not been given a mono-semantic interpretation in economic publications. An attempt to generalize a variety of views allowed the authors to suggest their own classification of approaches to the economic space research and to single out the territorial, resource, information, process, subject-object, institutional and system approaches. However, it should be noted that,



alongside the works with one dominant approach analyzed above, there are works the authors of which offer a comprehensive examination of economic space. Any further exploration of economic space as a category of economic science is likely to be caused by an attempt to specify its content, composition and structure.

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