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Scientific-Educational Cluster as a Way of Forming Innovation-Focused Partnership in Russian-Chinese Co-Development: Potential, Priorities and Development Vector in the Sociocultural Medium of Borderland

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The article substantiates the necessity for creation and development of a scientific-educational cluster under the conditions of activating Russian-Chinese co-development processes in the cross-border sociocultural medium. In the context of persistent expansion of Chinese “soft power”, clustering is more than a way of concentrating material and intellectual resources. Clustering means the only chance for the Russian border areas to prevent forced introduction of foreign cultural elements. Moreover, concentration of the mentioned resources will promote our culture in the cultural space of Chinese borderland in their undistorted forms. Authors suggest including the model of “the regional bordering cultures’ dialogue” into the clustering concept to provide the basis for the clusters’ functioning in the Russian-Chinese borderland and to build the behaviour pattern of mutual complementarity, not the role-picking one. The basic clustering functions shall be laid on universities acting as integrating power for the anthropological, sociocultural and other factors of the phenomenon. Those are the borderland universities, united by similar characteristics, that are able to lead Russian education into the competitive conditions of Russian-Chinese international educational space development.

Keywords: regional borderland culture, clustering, sociocultural space, Russian-Chinese cross-border cooperation, scientific-educational cluster, integration, innovation.

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Research area: economics.

Due to rapid growth, relations between the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China require adequate research considering the specificity of their functioning medium. The length of Russian-Chinese border leads to the

development of a new paradigm of analysing the borderland as a peculiarly organized medium, limited both by geographic and some sociocultural features. For this reason, it is fair to develop innovative mechanisms of interaction

between the borderlands of Russia and China in the context of mutual influence and cooperation.

Studying general modern geography of Russian-Chinese relations, we may notice that they form two lines: Centre-Centre (Moscow, Saint Petersburg – Beijing, Shanghai) and borderland cooperation (so-called regional pairs, e.g. the Transbaikal Territory (Krai) – Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region). The interaction of the first type receives much more attention, falling beyond the general vector of Russian-Chinese cooperation set by the governments of the two countries. The sociocultural medium of Russian and Chinese borderland consists of the border regions' cultures remarkable for adopted cultural phenomena, readiness for cultural interaction, solidarity in the peoples' world outlook due to the closeness to the state border; all these factors determine the main feature of the borderland scientific and educational cluster as a cumulation of scientific and educational institutions working in the borderlands of the Russian Federation and People's Republic of China with no clear geographic and other borders.

The need for the educational cluster is caused by the need to unite educational business projects, fundamental research, modern design systems, methods, intellectual products and the production of such products within a single (territorial, functional) zone (Kasyanova, 2013). Along with that, it is worthwhile noticing that in this context the borderlands are specific for being the borderland outposts, ensuring both development and security of the whole territory of the Russian Federation.

The main task of borderland sociocultural cluster modelling is preservation of regional cultural identity and use of the regional borderland cultures as the main tool for co-development of the borderlands of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China. In this context, it is necessary to complete Russia's

borderland socioeconomic development strategy with the tasks of sociocultural co-development of both countries' borderlands. The base for these processes is the cultural and civilizational potential of the regional borderland cultures presented as an original sociocultural phenomenon, acting in culture studies as a specific single whole, uniting the substantial anthropological, social, and cultural characteristics. In the context of persistent expansion of Chinese "soft power", clustering is more than a way of concentrating material and intellectual resources. Clustering means the only chance for the Russian border areas to prevent forced introduction of foreign cultural elements and to promote its own culture into the foreign medium of the Chinese borderland. As an option, it is possible to develop the so-called "regional bordering cultures' dialogue" model, which would form the base for the functioning of sociocultural borderline clusters of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China due to the wholeness of the borderline cultures, and build the behaviour pattern of mutual complementarity, not that of role-picking. Borderline sociocultural clustering is the dominant strategy involving qualitative changes in all spheres of Russian borderline life. This strategy has to be proactive (in respect with the Chinese trend) and be oriented to ensuring the integrity of the country and its regions (Morozova, 2013).

It is fair to mention that cluster approach is relatively new in the context of cultural and philosophic understanding of any phenomena, filling it with "competitive ability". Thus, outlining borderland regional culture is a topical issue for the cluster policy development, strengthening Russian cultural presence abroad and creating advantageous conditions for the promotion of Russian cultural and spiritual values. The use of cluster approach is relatively new in culture-philosophic practice, applied to regional culture research due to its ability to determine

qualitative and quantitative competitive activities of the regional culture and intensification of sociocultural development mechanisms. For this reason, the borderland cultural phenomena may serve as a base for creating a borderland cultural cluster, which, in its turn, shall strengthen Russian cultural presence in the world and create advantageous conditions for the promotion of Russian cultural and spiritual values abroad (Morozova, 2013).

In connection with everything said above and considering the specific orientation of the modelled scientific and educational cluster, the cluster may consist of the educational and scientific institutions of such regions as Transbaikal Territory (Krai), Amur Oblast, Jewish Autonomous Oblast, Khabarovsk Territory (Krai), Primorsky Territory (Krai), the Republic of Altai (with a short border of 50 km). However, such regions as the Republic of Buryatia, Altai Territory (Krai), Krasnoyarsk Territory (Krai), not being listed as border regions, still possess some sociocultural functioning peculiarities typical of borderland territories.

Moreover, the absence of clear geographic and other borders in the context of borderline cooperation helps using their potential in forming a scientific-educational borderline cluster. The said territories do not only possess unique scientific-educational resources allowing to integrate them into a viable cluster, but also have common functioning features within the Russian-Chinese borderline. Such approach uses the significance of the borderland and the intention of the RF borderland to increase efficiency of cooperation with China for solving common co-development tasks in the spheres of education and science.

If truth be told, let us remark that the Transbaikal Territory (Krai), being a part of the Siberian Federal District, with its sociocultural peculiarities is closer to the Far East Federal District. The discussed scientific and educational

cluster formation model may balance it. Let us also note that in the research work, grant application etc. we normally speak of the Transbaikal Territory and the Far East, not of the Transbaikal Territory as a part of the Siberian Federal District. However, it is a problem of regional division disputed in multiple researches including those of the borderland regional practice interpretation school (Oriental Studies Department of the Transbaikal State University and Chita Branch of the Far East Institute of Russian Academy of Science).

The cluster approach is a relatively new approach in the context of cultural and philosophic review of the borderland potential, filling the borderland cultural potential with “competitive ability”. We cannot ignore the need to complete the borderland socioeconomic development strategies with the tasks of sociocultural co-development of Russian and Chinese borderland in the proactive strategy context, which requires understanding of the scientific and educational cluster phenomenon as a potential source of security for the sociocultural environment of Russia.

Let us notice the fact that the cluster approach has been applied by the Chinese party to express the specificity of the borderland structure, including that in the context of science and education development. For example, the so-called cultural-historical cluster of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region has been in action for quite a long time. Using such a miscellaneous phenomenon for the cluster policy of Russia in order to strengthen Russian cultural presence abroad, to create advantageous conditions for the promotion of cultural and spiritual values of Russia, to intensify sociocultural development mechanisms looks really up-to-date.

Here is some reference information on Transbaikal State University and its international activity concentrated, first of all, in the Eastern

vector. Transbaikal State University is the Transbaikal Territory's leader in the number of departments and branches of studies; with 1700 students, it is the third one in the Siberian Federal District. Considering the geopolitical location of the region, TransSU concentrates its international activities around the Eastern borders, and, first of all, in the territory of cooperation with the closest countries, such as China and Mongolia. It has concluded over 70 partnership contracts and agreements with universities and other educational facilities of the countries. The university currently educates over 200 students from the PRC. In September 2015, a new dormitory for foreign students was commissioned. Exchange programmes for students, teachers and researchers are developing.

In this context, Transbaikal State University fulfils its potential as an active part of the following international associations:

- Asian University Association (based at Altai State University): in June 2016 the Association is going to hold its general assembly to discuss the development strategy for the next two years. Transbaikal State University is planning to express its initiative to form a scientific and educational cluster in the Russian-Chinese borderlands. As the General Assembly takes place along with a large-scale conference for Social Integration and Ethnic Cultures' Development in the Eurasian Environment and the BRICS Youth Assembly Conference, we hope that the issue may attract public attention.

- Russian and Chinese University Association (based at Pacific State University): in March 2016, Jilin Pedagogical University (Siping City) organizes its International Scientific and Educational Platform "Cooperation Beyond Borders" to integrate intellectual potential of scientists and representatives of two universities from Russia and China. The event is held with the support of Students' Associations

Development Programme for the year 2016, run by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation, and one of its objectives is the promotion of Russian language and Russian culture in the PRC territory.

Moreover, today Transbaikal State University initiates the foundation of the Independent Education Quality Assessment Association including multiple educational and scientific facilities of Russia, China, and Mongolia. In November 2015 there was a conference on this issue, where the honoured guests (Consul for Educational Affairs Ling Baixue, Consul for Science and Technology Affairs Li Jingwei, Consul for Economic and Trading Affairs Li Jinbin) expressed their approval and support for the performed work.

At the moment, the University is in the process of entering the SCO University. The open SCO University member status could help Transbaikal State University make a great contribution both in the further development of the RF borderland, and in creation of conditions for efficient integration of Russia into the international educational medium. Positive dynamics of Transbaikal State University cooperation with the PRC educational facilities is obvious: we can see the increase in the number of foreign students, diversification of cooperation fields, preparation and running of joint education programmes, increasing students' academic mobility. Let us also notice visible improvement of the facilities and infrastructure of the university. Moreover, with the support of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation, in September 2015 a new modern dormitory building for foreign students was commissioned, thereby increasing the accepting capacity of the university.

All these serve as the first step towards forming of a scientific and educational cluster in the borderland, including educational facilities of Russian regions united by their closeness

to the state border between Russia and China, thereby stimulating active humanitarian cooperation with China. We may also suggest that the scientific and educational cluster may stimulate innovative activity and free information exchange. As an option, close internal relations within the cluster may cause a tendency to integrating competitive advantages of scientific and educational facilities of the borderland. In this interaction process they may gradually overcome their current concentration on the internal problems, forming a powerful scientific and educational structure. That is what E.I. Chuchkalova speaks about when she says that creation of an educational cluster implies some general and specific tasks. The general tasks, common for all the parties, are: increasing

competitive ability of each member, innovative development, and increasing economic potential of the territory (Chuchkalova, 2013).

Let us also mention that a scientific and educational cluster is still an understudied phenomenon. What we may speak of today is just a possible scenario of model creation. Along with that, Russia's pivot to the East, activation of the Eastern vector in science and education cannot be ignored. The borderland cluster potential is interesting both from the point of view of concentrating scientific and educational resources and in the context of active integration into the foreign sociocultural medium, which, in case of success, will help Russian universities compete with the foreign ones in the international educational space.

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**Научно-образовательный кластер
как механизм становления
инновационного типа партнерства
в практике соразвития РФ – КНР:
потенциал, приоритеты и вектор развития
в приграничном социокультурном пространстве**

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В статье обосновывается необходимость создания и развития научно-образовательного кластера в условиях активизации процессов соразвития РФ – КНР в приграничном социокультурном пространстве. В условиях усиленной трансляции китайской «мягкой силы» формирование подобного кластера – это не только форма концентрации материальных и интеллектуальных ресурсов. В большей степени кластеризация подразумевает единственный шанс для приграничных территорий России не допустить насильственного внедрения инородных культурных элементов. Более того, концентрация вышеуказанных ресурсов позволит продвигать свою культуру в инокультурное пространство китайского приграничья в ее неискаженном виде. Авторы предлагают внедрить в концепцию кластеризации так называемую модель диалогичности региональных культур приграничья, которая станет основой функционирования кластеров в российско-китайском приграничье и выстроит схему дополняемости, но не выбора роли. Функции основополагающего звена формируемого кластера берет на себя университет, который рассматривается в качестве интегрирующего антропологические, социокультурные и иные факторы феномена. Именно университеты приграничья, объединяемые сходными характеристиками, способны вывести российское образование в пространство конкурентной борьбы в условиях развития международного образовательного пространства РФ – КНР.

Ключевые слова: региональная культура приграничья, кластеризация, социокультурное пространство, приграничное взаимодействие РФ – КНР, научно-образовательный кластер, интеграция, инновации.

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