'Global city' and 'global village': The emergence of urban-rural conflicts in Central Russia

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ABSTRACT

As complex societies expand, the process of urbanization increasingly affects people throughout the world. Due to global networks and mass media, the urban way of living is becoming more attractive and desirable. However, this process very often destroys traditional cultures, as well as personal and face-to-face social relations. People around the world increasingly experience the identity crisis, or the feeling of being marginalised. This problem was studied by Stanley Milgram, Phillip Zimbardo, Clifford O'Donnell and others as one of the main issues of environmental and community psychology. But now conflicts between the 'global city' and the 'global village', or between core and periphery, increasingly threaten the global development. This article can be considered as an attempt to estimate some impacts of post-modern global trends of urbanization on the dynamics of conflicts around the world on the case of these trends in Central Russia.

KEYWORDS: city, village, urbanization, globalization, identity crisis, conflict.

Introduction

In the mid-twentieth century a number of social scientists started to borrow the ecological concepts and apply them to the studies of communities, especially the urban ones. Calling their approach *urban ecology*, they examined how the social uses of urban land result from an interaction between diverse groups of people and their physical/geographical environment (Schwirian 1983: 83-102). Recognizing that a city (even a pre-industrial one) is a social context very different from peasant communities, Robert Redfield (1950; 1953; 1956) focused on contrasts between rural and urban life, defining rural and urban cultures, based on 'little traditions' (local and orally transmitted) and 'great traditions' (non-local and literate). He contrasted rural communities, in which social relations were based on face-to-face communication, with cities, where impersonality characterised many aspects of life. He proposed urbanization to be studied along a rural-urban continuum. Several studies in Africa and Asia were influenced by Redfield's view that cities are the centres through which cultural innovations spread to rural and tribal areas (Kottak 1991: 299-300),

while in the local Russian rural environment Alexander Chayanov (1977; 1986) developed a theory of peasant economics on the case of Russian peasant communities (*obshchini*).

However, although we are now increasingly facing the global trends of these processes, they seem to be mostly neglected by many scholars and social scientists, as if the urbanisation along with its consequences is concluded. This paper is in this view an attempt to analyze some issues of the conflict between 'global city' and 'global village', and an attempt to provide some theoretical groundwork for studying these processes, based on the on-going research of this processes in the towns of Ivanovo and Yaroslavl in Central Russia. It could be suggested that mental space (meaning a set of ideas, both personal and collectively shared, about community environment, as well as the ways of adaptation in it, is one of the key factors in understanding these processes. In Foucault's (2000: 131) sense a mental space is knowledge, meaning that people judge their surrounding world according to a certain regime of truth, which tells them right from wrong, good from bad or ours from theirs. The question is whether this space leaves room for individual – and group – security, creativity, and freedom of choice. Mental space enables us to identify ourselves with stereotypes, founded in ethnicity, race, gender roles, social statuses, age ('social clock'), as well as attitudes, social norms and values. These stereotypes, and the mental space itself, derive from traditions – special segments of our culture – and they develop along with a social group. This segment of culture is perceived by people as a tangible reality which helps them resolve their everyday problems. Tradition is expressed in various verbal and non-verbal means, such as language, rituals, mores, customs, music, dance, architecture, sculpturing or painting. These issues have been examined by many scholars, such as Eric Hobsbawm (1983a; b) who pointed out that traditions are social inventions and not some primordial characteristics, or Maurice Halbwachs (1950), who showed how traditions are shaped and stored as collective memory. In this regard also Pierre Nora (1996) showed how memories and traditions relay on the material 'sites of memory', such as monuments or historical sites. All these scholars came to similar conclusions, showing that collective knowledge and personal knowledge are in close interaction, although they are also able to act independently.

Collectivism or individualism?

Regarding the way how people relate to traditions and how in return traditions influence their mental spaces it is possible to distinguish between two manners – the rigid and the conventional one. The rigid manner is characterised by the strict individual obedience to tradition without any doubt about its legitimacy. As a result, a closed mental space emerges. This mental space is hostile toward any alternative idea about the community environment, as well as to the ways of adaptation in it. In such a case, every individual tries to comply with the homogeneity of one's social group, be it nation, ethnic group or any other social collectivity. If they fail to meet that demand, people start to be inevitably treated as if they are endangering the order of society. They are perceived as deviant or even as mentally ill. Foucault (1961), for example described how madness was invented exactly through the process of 'othering', which created normality and gave the 'normal' population a tool to characterise a part of the population as mentally ill. People with the closed mental space oppose any innovation and vice versa, a conventional manner includes high degree of

individual freedom. As a result, an open mental space emerges. People are encouraged to change tradition, to be innovative and open, and to look for new ways of adaptation in the community environment. It is possible to examine both manners as two oppositional regimes of truth (Foucault 2002: 131), each judging things according to its own rules. In reality these regimes of truth are often connected with each other, especially in case of the identity crisis.

An individual or a group characterized by closeness of the mental space tend to think and behave in following some rigid, collectively shared stereotypes. As a result, conformity toward 'in-group' norms and values, as well as intolerance and even aggressiveness toward alternative ways of thinking and lifestyles become the collectively approved personal features. Benedict Anderson's (1991) idea of imagined communities explains the increasing role of the mass media in these processes. Since they have been introduced, the sense of belonging of people was strengthened because these in-group norms started to be effectively disseminated among larger groups of people, who started to feel related to other members of these groups although they did not personally know them or even know that they existed. The practices of the totalitarian regimes with their system of propaganda seem to be good examples of that suggestion. The closed mental space produces authoritarian personalities. The self-identity of the authoritarian personality emerges as a solidarity bonding factor. A person tends to look upon one's own group as central to everything. The group fulfils one's need for security and provides a sense belonging. A member of a group prefers one's own way of doing things, and perceives other groups as endangering foreigners to one's own group. Instead of understanding alternative ways of life, such person chooses struggling against foreigners rather than trying to live with them. This kind of mechanism is typical for closed rural communities.

The openness of the mental space, on the other hand, encourages people to choose alternative ways of thinking and lifestyles. As a result, a tolerant personality is developing. The emergence of self-identity of these people is based not on the exclusion, but rather on the acceptation and understanding of alternative ways of life, thinking and acting. This tends to be more typical for urban communities because the level of individualization within urban population is higher. It could be that people simply care only for themselves but are otherwise fairly isolated, even lonely. In this regard, they differ from village communities, which are much more connected, everybody knows everything about everybody and everybody knows that. This knowledge functions as a strong social control and because of it, rural communities are more closed and often more intolerant to the violation of their informal rules and norms.

Therefore, in any country, urban and rural populations function as different social systems. Perhaps the differences between both populations are in some cases greater than the differences between urban populations of two neighbouring countries. Nevertheless, cultural diffusion does occur through product exchange and communication. Migrants bring rural practices and beliefs to towns and cities and take urban patterns back home. The experiences and social forms of the rural area affect the adaptation to city life and often produce various interpersonal and social conflicts.

Caught between two or more social groups, people usually experience an identity crisis, or feeling of being marginalised. They are not fully a part of either group, and unless insulated by the emotional support system of a cohesive sub-community, they will

most likely end up living an emotionally stressful life (Milgram 1970). But people tend to differ in dealing with these problems. Those who are more authoritarian often struggle for status, power and prestige in an aggressive manner. As a result, destructive ways of solving these problems tend to prevail over the constructive ones. People who tend to be more tolerant are more likely to emphasize openness to innovation as well as creativity and they prefer to choose constructive ways of dealing with the identity crisis.

The most developed, or 'core' nations of Northern America, as well as of Western Europe, Far East, Australia and New Zealand, may be considered as 'centres' of the 'global city'. Due to some geographical traits of the European continent (high population densities, mild climate or proximity of water resources), a large network of towns and cities appeared already in the medieval Western and Central Europe. As a result, the traits of urban way of living, characterised by individualism, personal autonomy, impersonality and social mobility gradually became typical for Catholic and Protestant Europe. Consequently, the principles of democracy, individual freedom, respect to human rights, tolerance, and superiority of law can perhaps be considered as a result of the long-term dominance of the urban way of living.

The 'global city' invades the world

Like any open system, a city tends to invade the surrounding territory. And so does the 'global city'. The great European 'discoveries' of continents occurred between the 15th and the 18th centuries when Europeans were seeking new ways of trade and new sources for raw materials. The world system with its core and periphery emerged. Some territories in North America, Australia and New Zealand where European colonists and their ancestors formed the majority of population gradually became the part of the 'global city' while other parts of the world were excluded from this. During the colonial era the Europeans were faced with cultures they found different and exotic. But however different these cultures seemed the closed rural communities with their personal and face-to-face relations were the principal social units almost everywhere.

Very often the colonizers regarded the non-Western cultures as 'primitive', 'savage' or 'barbarous'. These biases advocated and legitimised many atrocities. An average 250,000 indigenous people had perished annually between 1800 and 1950 (Kottak 1991: 155). Foreign diseases (to which natives had no resistance), warfare, slavery, land grabbing, and other forms of dispossession and impoverishment contributed to this genocide (ibid.). In time, struggles against colonial oppression rose around the world and the colonial era may be considered as the beginning of the conflict between the 'global city' and the 'global village'. After the Second World War the colonial system crashed down, and by the beginning of the 21st century the world has changed considerably.

First of all, the majority of people today are descendants of the non-Western groups. According to Harper (1989), the countries with cheaper labour predominantly produce steel, automobiles, and other heavy goods. Some countries like Saudi Arabia produce oil that is so important for the Western nations. In this regard, the 'global village' rapidly industrializes. It is beginning to play a vital role in the global economy. At the same time, the economy of the most developed nations (the 'global city') is increasingly shifting from the production of goods toward the provision of specialized services, including

information processing. The value creation in the post-modern western economy rests increasingly on non-tangible assets. Therefore, the geographical constraints of earlier eras – for example, the access to good natural harbours or the proximity to raw materials and cheap energy sources – no longer exert the same pull they once did. Instead, what matters most now are those attributes and characteristics of particular places that make them attractive to potentially mobile, much sought-after, talent. A growing number of people seek their jobs, as well as the place of living in order to maintain the life styles promoted by the culture of consumption. Due to mass media and global networks, such life standards are increasingly being translated from the 'global city' to the 'global village'.

But the contrast between these standards and real living conditions of the majority of people around the world is tremendous. The gap between affluence and poverty, between core and periphery, between 'global city' and 'global village' dramatically increases. It produces frustration and feeling of marginality. To deal with the identity crisis, people increasingly move to big cities, despite the numerous administrative barriers. They are seeking prosperity and security, but very often they end up disillusioned. These processes produce conflicts within the 'global city', such as riots that took place in France in 2005. The growing number of radical ideological doctrines around the world advocates the traditional values of the 'global village' and opposes the Western way of living. These conflicts increasingly appear in their extreme forms like those we witnessed at the September 11 attack in New York in 2001.

The border between the 'global city' and the 'global village' often divides the same country, too. The case of Russia seems to be a very good example of that. Although the majority (more than 70 percent) of people in Russia now lives in cities and towns, the traditions of closed rural community – *obshchina* – are still alive and well. Current situation is a legacy of the rapid urbanization during the Soviet era, when the majority of rural population moved to urban cities and towns. The official state ideology encouraged the traditional collectivism so typical for the *obshchina* and ut was incorporated in the urban environment in numerous modifying forms such as – for example – forms of communal apartments.

After the collapse of Communism and the radical reforms of the 1990s, the Russian society changed drastically. It became imbued with the consumerist culture and many Russians, especially the young and the middle-aged ones, started chasing the 'Russian dream' to become *krutoy* – to run a successful business, to owe a luxurious dwelling or to drive an expensive automobile. Unlike in the Soviet era, numerous traits of the way of life of the 'global city', including enormous traffic jams and TV soap operas, became everyday reality in Russia.

In consequence, the market reforms produced a dramatic gap between affluence and poverty, and triggered the growing criminalization within the society. As a result, a lot of Russians today experience the identity crisis, characterised by a paradox: they want to be rich, but at the same time many of them want the old USSR back (Afanasyev 2001). As a result, the hostilities toward the Western practises, or the 'global city', are increasing. At the same time, many people are highly sympathetic to the Chinese experience in combining the market economy with traditional state paternalism, and with the main traits of the Communist regime. These popular attitudes may be considered as a background of the emergence of the neo-Eurasianism as the Russian state ideology of the beginning of the 21st century.

Based on the systematic phenomenology, our study of these problems is in the beginning phase. We are, therefore, discussing only some procedures, as well as preliminary results of the analysis of the already gathered empirical data. While studying the psychological issues of these processes, we are predominantly trying to estimate the quality of life within the community. According to Czikszentmihalyi, '[…] the actual quality of life – what to do, and how we feel about it – will be determined by our thoughts and emotions, by the interpretations we give to chemical, biological, and social processes' (1997: 4). But these thoughts and emotions may be considered as a result of perceptive processes within particular environmental settings.

'Global city' or 'global village'? The emergence of mental space within a modern Russian city

The presented data were obtained from a study within two neighbouring big cities of Central Russia: Ivanovo (its population is about 424,000) and Yaroslavl (approximately 613,000 inhabitants). Our respondents were kindly requested to write a few sentences concerning their attitudes and stereotypes as well as their value orientations and life strategies. Since the study is still in progress, the report includes only some preliminary results from samples of 560 and 728 respondents living in Ivanovo and in Yaroslavl, respectively. With their age between 17 and 73, the sample represents all main social and professional groups of contemporary Russian society. As a result of content analysis of the reported answers, the data has been organized data in accordance with their frequency distribution.

Collectivism, common sense, authority, power seem to be significant for the majority of the respondents from Ivanovo. Their life strategies are connected with rigid stereotypes about their gender roles, social statuses, or age, among other things. To solve their problems, people from Ivanovo – including the business persons (82 respondents) – are not sympathetic to innovations, but would rather increase their profits in a *laissez-faire* manner. Unlike the general sample from Ivanovo, the students who live and study in this city (136 respondents) demonstrate much more tolerance and creativity. The majority of these students (67 percent) expressed that after their graduation they would like to leave Ivanovo for other cities, especially for Moscow.

While analyzing the data obtained from the Yaroslavl sample, the responses revealed that individual achievement, personal autonomy, knowledge and competence seem to be significant for our respondents. Not only the business persons (95 respondents), but the majority in the Yaroslavl sample tended to welcome new ideas, innovation, and creativity. As for the students living and studying in Yaroslavl, the majority of them (64 percent) do not want to move from this city after their graduation.

To understand the differences between both samples, we have analyzed some local traditions both in Ivanovo and in Yaroslavl. Having been known since the 16th century as a centre of the Russian weave handicraft, Ivanovo has been institutionalized as a city in 1871 with the Act of the Emperor Alexander II. But Ivanovo-Voznyesensk (as this city was named until 1932) continued to develop as a closed system, preserving the lifestyle of the Russian rural community *obshchina*. The differences in this regard could be influenced also by geographical factors. Despite of its proximity to Moscow, Ivanovo

is situated away from big rivers and the main railroads. Moreover, the city expanded only due to the growth of the textile industry. Because of this mono-structural economy its social structure was homogenous including mainly former impoverished peasants. In a closed mono-professional and mono-cultural community with rigid traditional instruments of social influence and social control, a high degree of conformity has been required. Tradition tends to affect the emergence of the mental space in its rigid manner. As a result, the closeness of the mental space motivated people to be more authoritarian.

During the Soviet era the Communist authorities were trying to turn Ivanovo into a model of a 'city of future'. Today the results seem to be the opposite. On the one hand, Ivanovo has become one of the largest university centres in Russia. Currently there are nine universities and other institutions of higher education in the city, but despite that, the structure of the local economy is still based mainly on the textile industry and has not considerably changed. The extensive development of this industry required many low-skilled workers from the countryside who were forced to move in the city because of the collectivization of their lands. A large and sudden invasion of new people inevitably awakens a strong sense of community (Freudenburg 1984: 697-705) and this is probably what happened here. But the elements of local traditions were mixed with official ideological patterns (it would be possible to define this phenomenon as 'quasi-traditionalism'). As a result, the new and old inhabitants of Ivanovo started to experience a kind of identity crisis. This crisis became much more obvious in the post-Soviet era, because of the economic crisis in the local mono-structural economy, which consequently led to high unemployment rates and deteriorating social conditions.

These circumstances seem to be important for estimating the quality of life in Ivanovo. Within the academic community of the city new ideas and technologies are successfully elaborated. They could help the local economy to be restructured in a way of introducing new high-tech industries. But the dominant tradition is still defined by the closeness of mental space. As a result, quasi-traditional ideas, attitudes, and values are encouraging people to act in the authoritarian spirit and to oppose any serious innovation. Consequently, potentially mobile, much sought-after talents (including the students involved in our study) expect to move to other cities and regions of Russia.

As for Yaroslavl, considered as one of the oldest Russian cities, it is still situated at the crossroad of the traditional pathways of Russian merchants. Therefore, throughout its history this city tended to develop an open system of mentality. Its traditions have been flexible to different lifestyles of various social and professional groups and tended to affect the emergence of the conventional mental space. This has been encouraging the city dwellers to be more tolerant and open to change. In the national sense many innovative practices and novelties have been introduced in Yaroslavl, such as the first Russian professional theatre established in 1750 by Fyodor Volkov. The development of the city was supported and accelerated by the reforms of the 1860s. These reforms gave way to the establishment of the middle class in Russia, and Yaroslavl has become one of the centres of this process. As a result, it developed all the elements which make a small town comfortable and those that make a large city cosmopolitan.

During the Soviet era the Communists tended to consider Yaroslavl as an 'unreliable city' due to the anti-Bolshevik rebellion which occurred in July 1918. However, once

it was included in the Communist social experiment, Yaroslavl started to be considered as a model the city of future. The result of this is that not only cultural (architectural) heritage of the city, but also traditional tolerance and openness are quite distinctive. Combined with a diversified structure of local economy, this situation favours providing ideas, know-how, creativity, and imagination. The numerous economic and social problems of Yaroslavl (such as the gap between affluence and poverty, high crime rate, terrible air pollution, etc.) are existing, but in comparison to the majority of communities in Russia like Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Nizhny Novgorod, Samara, Yekaterinburg, and some other cities, Yaroslavl is today perceived as one of the most probable places in Russia to provide a good quality of life (Neshchadin & Gorin 2001: 210-24).

Conclusions

Discussing the results of the study, we assume that when living in the more isolated communities with monotonous natural and architectural surrounding, as well as the lack of cultural diversity, people tend to demonstrate value orientations and life strategies of the authoritarian personality. This situation results from the closeness of the mental space. The openness of this space and tolerance are rather typical for our respondents from areas with variety of natural and architectural landscapes, as well as cultural diversity. Therefore, the rise of the quality of life may be resulted from the openness of the mental space within the community.

Since our study is a work in progress, this assumption may be considered only as a kind of hypothesis. The gap between the 'global city' and the 'global village' in Russia seems to be visible. Some big cities, including Yaroslavl, are rather close to the 'global city' because of their history and their current development. One of the indications for that is that people, who were born in such cities, are increasingly avoiding the low-paid jobs and leave them to the migrants from the economically deprived regions of Russia, as well as to those from other former Soviet republics. We can observe such a situation within the 'global city' as a whole. However, many Russian cities and towns, like Ivanovo, rather resemble the 'global village'.

Currently the sample included in the research is being enlarged in order to make it more representative, and to be able to perform more accurate and complete analysis of the statistical data. In addition, we try to elaborate new methods, particularly the experimental ones, for the complex monitoring research of the mental space within the community. But, first of all, we are testing the conceptual frameworks of this research. Indeed, the development of a cultural community psychology has implications for the traditional distinction between basic and applied psychology, for our understanding of context, partnerships between academicians and practitioners, and for the place of community psychology within the discipline of psychology (O'Donnell 2006: 1-7). Since we consider culture as the context of diversity which is – in the process – becoming a cultural community psychology, we expect to develop a multi-disciplinary, cross-cultural approach based on the systematic phenomenology.

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POVZETEK

Z vzponom razvitih družb je proces urbanizacije vse bolj vplival na življenje ljudi po vsem svetu. Zaradi globalnega povezovanja in množičnih medijev postaja urbano življenje vse bolj zapeljivo in zaželeno. Ta proces neizogibno spreminja tradicionalne kulture kot tudi osebne družbene odnose. Ljudje po vsem svetu vse bolj občutijo krizo identifikacije oziroma občutek marginaliziranosti. S to problematiko kot eno izmed osrednjih zanimanj okoljske in skupnostne psihologije so se raziskovalno ukvarjali Stanley Milgram, Phillip Zimbardo, Clifford O'Donnell in drugi teoretiki. Posledica te krize so porajajoči se konflikti med 'globalnim mestom' in 'globalno vasjo', med periferijo in centrom, ki vse bolj ogrožajo globalni razvoj. Pričujoči članek je poskus ocenitve vplivov post-modernih globalnih trendov urbanizacije na dinamiko konfliktov po svetu na primeru tovrstnih trendov v osrednji Rusiji.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: mesto, vas, urbanizacija, globalizacija, kriza identitet, nasprotja.