Beyond Post-Modernity the Emergence of Alternative Spaces within the City in Central Russia

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Abstract—The shift from the production of goods toward the provision of specialized services is often considered as characteristic for post-modernity. Many traditional centres of heavy good industries currently experience sharp declines in their population numbers. But cities and towns that provide a variety of alternative spaces are avoiding the urban "shrinkage". Due to global networks and mass media, the consumerist culture becomes more attractive and desirable around the world. But, at the same time, it often destroys traditional cultures. The border between core and periphery, affluence and poverty, post-modernity and traditionalism is becoming tremendous. Very often this borderline divides the same country, and the case of Russia provides a very good example of that. This article is in this view an attempt to provide some theoretical groundwork for studying these processes, based on the case study of the cities of Ivanovo and Yaroslavl in Central Russia.

Keywords—post-modernity; modernization; tradition; urbanization; social space; Russia; Ivanovo; Yaroslavl

I. INTRODUCTION

Many scholars and social scientists insist on defining the current stage in development as post-modernity (Delanty 2000; Inglehart 1997). However, their opponents argue that now we observe but incomplete modernization (Wagner 1994; 2001). For better understanding the current situation, as well as arguments about it, we should perhaps analyze the substantial characteristics of modernization, modernity, and post-modernity. We suppose that the widespread of the urban way of living makes those characteristics obvious around the world.

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. In fact, the distribution of a population in space assumes critical significance. The “where” may be an area as large as a continent or as small as a city block. Between these extremes are world regions, states, cities, and rural areas.

One of the most significant developments in human history has been the development of cities. A city is a relatively dense and permanent concentration of people who secure their livelihood chiefly through non-agricultural activities. Although many of us take cities for granted, they are one of the most striking features of our era. The influence of the urban mode of life extends far beyond the immediate confines of a city’s boundaries. Many of the characteristics of the modern societies derive, in some way, from the urban existence.

Calling their approach urban ecology, these scholars and social scientists 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 that is very different from peasant communities, Robert Redfield 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) (Redfield 1950; 1953; 1956). He contrasted rural communities, whose social relations are on a face-to-face basis, with cities, where impersonality characterizes many aspects of life. He proposed that urbanization 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 (Little 1971). Alexander Chayanov developed a theory of peasant economics while dealing with empirical data gathered within Russian peasant communities (obshchiny) (Chayanov 1989).

Stanley Milgram examined the different ways of adaptation of urban and rural populations to various environmental settings in developing the perspective of environmental and community psychology (Milgram 1970).

But post-industrial economy changes considerably the scenarios of urban development. 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, the attributes and characteristics of particular cities and towns that make them attractive to talented, mobile, creative individuals are increasingly crucial for their development. According to Florida, these processes give way to the emergence of the creative class and the creative, knowledge-based, economy (Florida 2002; 2004; 2005; 2008). But, although we are now increasingly facing the global trends of these processes, they seem to be sadly neglected by many scholars and social scientists, as if the urbanization along with its consequences is concluded.

This article is in this view an attempt to provide some theoretical groundwork for studying these processes, based on the on-going research in the cities of Ivanovo and Yaroslavl in Central Russia.
II. TRADITION AND EMERGING SOCIAL SPACE WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

It could be suggested that while using and transforming, to a more or less extent, its physical environment, every community develops a set of commonly shared living practices, and, then, produces the particular social space. Alongside with these practices, social space means the special moral climate within the community. In Foucault’s sense, moral climate 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 (Foucault 2000).

The phenomenon of mores (singular of mos) has been examined since long ago by many scholars and social scientists. William Graham Sumner, for example, emphasized that the ways of doing things in a society are not thought out by systematic planning. “Men begin with acts, not with thoughts … Need was the first experience, and it was followed at once by a blundering effort to satisfy it” (Sumner 1971: 82). As these trial-and-error solutions are shared among others, they become folkways, conventionally proper ways to behave. Anyone who deviates from the folkway by trying some new way is suspected of disrespect, or unnatural interest in wasting time. If the folkway becomes entrenched in the traditions surrounding some area of life that the group considers a critical problem, then it becomes one of the mores. Folkways are conventions, ways of all knowing what to do in most situations. But, if mores are violated, it brings forth outrage and punishment. Mores soon becomes part of the existing basic truths. As Sumner says, they acquire the authority of facts. For the most part, they are not written down. They become unquestioned solutions, and they take great effort to dislodge. For example, mores are crucial in solving problems within different social groups. As a result, mores produce the distinctive moral climate within the particular community. Moral climate appears as a set of cognitive schemata and modes of behaviour, such as, for example, mental maps, identification (and, then, emerging identity), inclusion, exclusion, tolerance, social pressure, conformity, etc.

According to Černoušek, while perceiving their environment, people use to emphasize the most important (central, or core) information. At the same time, they tend to pay less attention to the periphery one (Černoušek 1986). This process can perhaps be explained in terms of emerging social space. But the question is whether this space leaves room for individual – and group – security, creativity, and freedom of choice. Social 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 social space itself, derive from cultural heritage. We suppose that cultural heritage is a result of an interaction between succeeding generation groups and their physical/geographical environment throughout the history of the particular place. Tradition can perhaps be considered as a special segment of cultural heritage. This segment is perceived by people as a tangible reality which helps them in resolving their everyday problems. Tradition is expressed in various verbal and non-verbal means, such as language, rituals, customs, music, dance, architecture, sculpturing, or painting. Suppose that mores define the content of these means. These issues have been examined by many scholars, such as Eric Hobsbawm, who pointed out that traditions are social inventions and not some primordial characteristics (Hobsbawm 1983a; 1983b), or Maurice Halbwachs, who showed how traditions are shaped and stored a collective memory (Halbwachs 1950). In this regard also Pierre Nora showed how memories and traditions relay on the material “sites of memory”, such as monuments, or historical sites (Nora 1996). 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.

Regarding the way how people relate to traditions and how in return traditions influence the emergence of social space, it is possible to distinguish between two manners – the rigid and the conventional one. The rigid manner is characterized by the strict individual obedience to tradition without any doubt about its legitimacy. As a result, a closed social space emerges. The moral climate produced by this kind of space is unfavourable toward any alternative worldview, as well as to the ways of adaptation in the community. In such a case, every individual tries to comply with the homogeneity of one’s social group, the 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, for example, describes 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 (Foucault 2000: 141). Individuals who develop this kind of worldview tend to oppose any serious innovation. In such a case, the social space gives no way for the emergence of alternative social spaces within the community.

And vice versa, a conventional manner means high degree of individual freedom. As a result, an open social 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. Here the alternative social spaces so crucial for the development of the community emerged.

It is possible to examine both manners as two oppositional regime of truth, each judging things according to its own rules (Foucault 2000: 143ff). In reality these regimes of truth are often connected with each other, especially in case of the identity crisis.

An individual or a group influenced by traditions in a rigid manner 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.
The closed social space tends to produce authoritarian personalities. The self-identity of the authoritarian personality emerges as a solidarity bonding factor. An individual tends to look upon one’s own group as central to everything. The group fulfills one’s need for security and provides a sense of belonging. A member of a group prefers one’s own way of doing things, and perceives other groups as endangering “strangers” to one’s own group. Instead of understanding alternative ways of life, such person chooses struggling against “strangers” rather than trying to live with them. This kind of mechanism is rather typical for many closed rural communities.

The openness of social space encourages individuals to choose alternative ways of thinking and lifestyles and, in so doing, to create alternative spaces for living, working, and leisure. These spaces are crucial in making the particular place attractive for creative individuals. As a result, a tolerant personality is developing. The emergence of self-identity of these individuals is based not on exclusion, but rather on acceptance and understanding of alternative ways of life, thinking, and acting. It 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 marginalized. 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 having an emotionally stressful life (Milgram 1970: 160-162). 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.

III. THE EMERGENCE OF THE WORLD SYSTEM: THE REST VERSUS THE WEST?

In the mid-1960s the concept of “global village” was proposed by Marshall McLuhan, while he examined the impact of mass media on the emergence of global culture (McLuhan 1964; 1967). This view expressed rather optimistic prospects on the world future so characteristic for the intellectual atmosphere of the mid twentieth century around the world. Technical progress, as one of the main traits of modernity, encountered as the background of social progress to solve the global problems of poverty, famine, social inequality, and violence. But the further global development has given much less reason for such an optimism. For better understanding the current situation we need examining the main tendencies in the emergence of the current conflict between urban and rural, core and periphery, or the “global city” and the “global village”.

The emergence of the first pre-industrial cities and towns resulted from the process of state formation. The settlement hierarchy, i.e., a ranked series of communities differing in size, functions, and type of buildings, appeared since the administrative and military systems of the state were developed (Kottak 1991: 138). Cities and towns became the centres of these systems. But the urban way of living became predominant only in the industrial era to be crucial for modernization of society.

The beginning of that era is initially traced to Western Europe. Due to some geographical traits of the European continent (high population densities, mild climate, and 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 Western Europe. Consequently, the principles of democracy, individual freedom, 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 and, hence, of that of the openness of social space.

Like any open system, a city tends to invade the surrounding territory. The great European “discoveries” of continents occurred between the 15th and the 18th centuries, when Europeans were seeking new ways for trade and new sources for raw materials. The world system with its “core” and “periphery” emerged (Wallerstein 1974; 1980; 1991). 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 “core”, while other parts of the world were excluded from this. As a result, the most developed, or “core”, nations of Northern America, as well as of Western Europe, Australia, and New Zealand, may be currently considered as “centres” of the “global city”.

During the colonial era the Europeans were faced cultures they found different and exotic. But however different these cultures seemed, the urban way of living was not still predominant outside Western countries as a “birthplace” of modernity. 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 legitimized many atrocities. An average 250,000 indigenous people had perished annually between 1800 and 1950. Foreign diseases (to which natives had no resistance), warfare, slavery, land grabbing, and other forms of dispossession and impoverishment contributed to this genocide (Kottak 1991: 155). 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, in the post-modern era the majority of people around the world are descendants of the non-Western groups. Some of the non-Western nations, like Japan and South Korea, became the part of the “global city” while combining their cultural traditions with principal traits of modernity. According to Harper, the countries with cheaper labour predominantly produce steel, automobiles, and other heavy goods (Harper 1989: 194-219). Some countries like Saudi Arabia produce the fuel that is so important for the Western nations. So the “global village” rapidly industrializes. It begins to play a vital role in the global economy. At the same time, the economy of the most developed nations 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 economies rests increasingly on non-tangible assets. As a result, the creative economy emerges. In Florida’s sense, due to the openness of social space within the considerable parts of communities, the Western economies are still winning the global competition for talent (Florida 2005).

But within the “global city” we can increasingly observe the regional discrepancies in urban development. Many traditional centres of heavy good industries experience sharp declines in their population numbers, or urban “shrinkage” (Steinführer et al. 2007). Economic restructuring seems to be one major cause for a rather long-term loss of population as the core dimension of urban shrinkage. According to Großmann, “falling fertility rates prove to be a common source of urban shrinkage in most countries and cities of Western Europe and North America” (Großmann et al. 2008: 79-80). At the same time, several cities and towns with diversified, mainly knowledge-based, economy, and a variety of alternative spaces for living, working, and leisure, are avoiding the “urban shrinkage”, while providing the high quality of life. 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” (Czikszentmihalyi 1997: 4).

As a result, the growing numbers 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. In Černoušek’s sense, these styles gradually become “central” in the processes of social perception (Černoušek 1986: 75ff). Due to mass media and global networks, such life standards are increasingly 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. Perhaps the global financial crisis, which we witnessed in the end of the 2000s, implies the crisis of the post-modern consumerist culture. The gap between “global city” and “global village”, affluence and poverty, core and periphery is widening dramatically. It produces frustration and feeling of being marginalized. To deal with the identity crisis, people increasingly move to big cities and to the “core” regions and countries that constitute the “global city”, despite of 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”, like the riots that were demonstrated 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 that is still based on the main principles of modernity. Instead of “the clash of civilizations” (Huntington 1996), rather global conflict of “the rest versus the West” in its most extreme forms, like those we witnessed at the 11 September 2001 attack in New York, marked dramatically the beginning of the 21st century.

Benedict Anderson’s idea of imagined communities explains the increasing role of the mass media in these processes (Anderson 1991). 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 and, to a less extent, authoritarian regimes with their system of propaganda seem to be good examples of that. 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. This is a legacy of the rapid urbanization during the Soviet era, when the majority of rural population moved to cities and towns. The official ideology encouraged the traditional collectivism so typical for the obshchina. It was incorporated in the urban environment in numerous modifying forms, such as, for example, those 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, 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.

But the market reforms produced a dramatic gap between affluence and poverty, as well as the growing criminalization within the society. As a result, a lot of Russians now experience the identity crisis, marked with a paradox: they want to follow the Western practices of consumption, but, at the same time, many of them want the old USSR back (Afanasyev 2001: 168-169). As a result, the hostility toward the Western-style democracy, as one of the main practices of the “global city”, is increasing. At the same time, many people are highly sympathetic to the Chinese experience in combining the market economy with traditional state paternalism, as well as the main traits of the Communist regime. We suggest that such an identity crisis is resulted, in some way, from the contradictions of the process of urbanisation, and those of the urban way of living in modern Russia.

Based on the systematic phenomenology, our study of these problems is just in progress. Therefore, we are 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 especially estimate the quality of life within the community. But this quality of life may be considered as a result of perceptive processes within particular environmental settings, i.e., the definite social space.

IV. ADVERTISING AND THE EMERGENCE OF SOCIAL SPACE WITHIN THE CITY IN CENTRAL RUSSIA

While supposing that advertising implies manifesting, more or less explicitly, stereotypes, norms, and values to characterize the social space within the particular place, we are currently analyzing the content of commercials presented at local electronic media within two big cities of Central Russia: Ivanovo (population: 406,465) and Yaroslavl (population: 605,408). While our study is still in progress, the report includes only some preliminary results of the analysis of 653 and 728 commercials in Ivanovo and in Yaroslavl, correspondingly. We have evaluated some personal traits of people performed in commercials. As a result of content analysis, the data have been organized in accordance with their frequency distribution.

The most of the local commercials in Ivanovo (about 62 percent) welcomes down-to-earth individuals who are succeeding in business with the emphasis not on individual achievement, knowledge, and creativity, but rather on luck and common sense, while being included into the vast network of informal, close-knit interpersonal relations. Insolence, toughness, and simplicity are presented as socially desirable traits to achieve the prestige position of krutoy. The life strategies, which are declared, more or less clearly, in commercials, are based on rigid stereotypes about the gender roles, social statuses, or age, among other things. For example, the electronic media present mainly sex-typed images of female and male personality and behaviour to maintain the idea of male (muzhik) dominance, which is so characteristic for traditional machismo. Therefore, to become successful, individual must be included into a homogenous social space, and not create any alternative space.

While analyzing the data obtained from the analysis of advertising in Yaroslavl, we noticed that the most of commercials (about 74 percent) seem to be stylistically neutral. Ones showed, more or less openly, that individual achievement, personal autonomy, knowledge, and competence seem to be socially desirable traits of individuals. For example, unlike in Ivanovo, the media present no sex-typing images, and there is no idea of male or female dominance. These messages tend to welcome new ideas, innovation, and creativity. Alternative lifestyles are not blamed, but, rather, encouraged as being useful for individual achievement, as well as for successful development of community.

To understand the differences between both types of commercials, we have analyzed the main traits of the cultural heritage and 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-Voznesensk (as this city was named until 1932) continued to develop as a closed system, preserving the lifestyle of the Russian rural community obshchina. Such a scenario of urban development 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 monostuctural 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 an individual in its rigid manner. As a result, the closed social 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”. Therefore, here the outcomes of the Soviet-style modernization were perhaps more obvious in comparison with many other Russian cities and towns. Today the results seem to be the opposite. On the one hand, Ivanovo has become one of the biggest university centres in Russia. Now there are nine universities and other institutions of higher education in the city, but on the other hand, the structure of the local economy is still based mainly on the textile industry and has not been considerably changed to produce any alternative social space. The extensive development of this industry, in a manner of the dawn of industrialism, required many low-skilled workers from the countryside who were forced to move to 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), 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 crisis in the local monostructural economy, which consequently led to high unemployment rates and deteriorating social conditions. In spite of the improvement of the situation in the mid-2000s, resulted from the rising oil prices and the influx of investments from Moscow (along with many traits of the lifestyle of the capital city), mainly low-wage service jobs have been created. The global financial crisis of the end of the 2000s threatens considerably such a model of urban development.

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 social space. As a result, quasi-traditional ideas, attitudes, and values, while mixed with the main elements of the consumerist culture, are encouraging people to act in the authoritarian spirit and to oppose any serious innovation. For instance, despite of increasing traffic difficulties, people prefer to drive their automobiles everywhere. The automobiles themselves are regarded not as vehicles, but rather as symbols to show off wealth and prestige of krutoy. Consequently, pedestrians or bike riders are often treated as being of low social status. As a result, the pedestrian zones or biking tracks, or alternative spaces for pedestrians or bike-riders, are not developed. Although it is not the main reason that motivates potentially mobile, much sought-after talents to move to other cities and regions of Russia, it may be considered as one of the obstacles in improving the quality of life.

On the opposite, Yaroslavl is considered as one of the oldest Russian cities. Yaroslavl is still situated at the crossroad of the traditional pathways of Russian merchants. Therefore, throughout its history this city tended to develop an open social space. Its traditions have been flexible to different lifestyles of various social and professional groups and tended to affect an individual by its conventional manner. 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 seriously accelerated by the reforms of the 1860s. These reforms gave way to the appearance 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. Once it was included in the Communist social experiment, Yaroslavl was not considered as a model of the “city of future”. The result of this is that not only cultural (e.g., 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, or alternative spaces, so important in estimating the quality of life. For instance, unlike in Ivanovo, a vast pedestrian zone has been developed in the centre of Yaroslavl. It can be considered as an alternative space so crucial in preventing traffic difficulties and air pollution.

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, Yaroslavl, like Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Nizhny Novgorod, Samara, Yekaterinburg, and some other cities, is today perceived as one of the most probable places in Russia to provide a good quality of life (Neshchadin and Gorin 2001: 173). The data obtained from the recent survey research seem to support this idea. The majority of 214 students involved in this survey research in Yaroslavl (64 percent) do not want to move from this city after their graduation, like the young people from other relatively “prosperous” cities of Russia, including Moscow and Saint Petersburg. People, who were born in Yaroslavl, are increasingly avoiding the low-paid and low-skilled 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. On the other hand, although the students who live and study in Ivanovo (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 (Kleyman 2007: 164).

V. Discussion/Conclusion

Discussing the results of the study, we assume that when living in the more isolated communities with homogeneous, closed social space, people tend to demonstrate value orientations and life strategies of the authoritarian personality. On the opposite, the openness of social space and a variety of alternative spaces within the particular place make it attractive for creative individuals. Therefore, the rise of the quality of life may be resulted from the openness of social space. Nowadays such openness can perhaps prevent the processes of urban “shrinkage” and increasing regional discrepancies in urban development.

Since our study is a work in progress, this assumption may be considered only as a kind of hypothesis. Not only regional discrepancies in urban development, but, more broadly, the gap between the “global city” and the “global village” in Russia seems to be obvious. Some big cities, including Yaroslavl, are rather close to the “global city” because of their relatively open social spaces and a variety of alternative spaces. However, the majority of Russian cities and towns, like Ivanovo, can be considered as being currently in transition from the “global village” to the
“global city”. They present rather hybrid forms, while mixing the elements of the post-modern consumerist culture with those of the quasi-traditional stereotypes, beliefs, and values. Here the closed, homogenous social space is still emerging. People who live in such cities and towns consider relatively “prosperous” cities, first of all, Moscow, as “another country” outside “the real Russia”. The young people increasingly move to big cities despite serious ecological and social problems and administrative barriers. This situation can perhaps be explained as a result of a tremendous gap between Russian “core” and “periphery” considering the quality of life. As a result, the cities and towns of “periphery” experience the urban “shrinkage”. In turn, the quasi-traditional ideas and values that are widespread within the majority of settlements in Russia (e.g., within Ivanovo) are still influencing considerably the way of living within the big cities, as well as that of decision making within the elites. These popular attitudes may be considered as a background of the emergence of neo-Eurasianism as the official, in somewhat Soviet traditions. In 2008. Who’s your city: How the quasi-ecology to advocate Putin’s scenario of authoritarian modernization.

VI. REFERENCES


