

Russia's Changing World: Resources, Networks, Localities

Oleg YANITSKY

Problem Presentation

Today the watershed between people moving freely in time and those who have to live within a definite space, i.e., being tied up to a certain “locality” such as their workplace, a town, a village, the place of their permanent residence or their summer cottage, a river, a forest or a natural ecological system is more distinct than ever before. As Zigmunt Bauman aptly notes, “it is quite possible that the last quarter of the 20th century will probably go down in history as the Great War of Independence from space.” In the course of that war decision-making centers (and estimates underpinning their decisions) persistently disentangled themselves from territorial restrictions stemming from bonds with a certain locality.¹ The above scheme represents a new macroecology of the world with Russia being drawn into it among others. The key social conflict today and one of the principal issues of the politics of the globalization age are represented by an all-pervasive and unifying flow of resources (money, commodities, people and information) and networks of power and influence dependent on them, a conflict with no less important resources which are more diversified than the former ones and “are attached to localities” (minerals, rivers, seas, cultural landscapes and human communities incorporated into them). They ensure mutual stability thereby maintaining a relative balance between the biosphere and people living by it.

This article attempts to approach the issue of interaction between resources and networks, define their role in the development of individuals, their culture and basic rights and freedoms and discuss these issues from a humanitarian standpoint. Networks and resources are of a dual character: on the one hand, they help boost the potential of human development and expand the boundaries of human freedoms, but on the other, they put limits on them. In the latter case networks are chains and resources are ballast weighing heavily on them or else they

O. Yanitsky, D. Sc. (Philosophy), leading research fellow at the Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences. This article was first published in Russian in the journal *Mir Rossii*, No. 3, 2010. The study has been done with financial support by the Russian Foundation of Fundamental Research (Grant No. 09-06-00061a).

might be described as a swamp where you can get bogged down. But that is not all. In reality there is always a triad of conditions supporting the life of a society or an individual: resources, networks and habitable localities, i.e., socially ordered and culturally specific places. Anyone tied up with a certain locality and deprived of the opportunity to freely join communication networks (real or virtual) is in effect deprived of sociality and a development potential. In this context the *GULAG* Archipelago is the archetype of this situation. The nomad constantly moving around in a space (whether physical or virtual) has no roots in any particular locality. Consequently he too loses his identity. By the same token he is deprived of sociality which is understood as a combination of civil rights and obligations toward a concrete community of people or a natural ecological system. The nomad is depressed by the illusion of absolute freedom. He begins looking for a "locality," a haven. As a result, he has to tackle a task beyond his strength, the task of "striking root" in the networks of "fluctuating modernity."² The archetype of the latter situation looks like a "utopia" in the original sense of the word "a place that does not exist in reality." Bauman has formulated the fundamental problem of present-day society: people belonging to a rich minority with their capital, people living and functioning in a space, i.e., freely moving around the world, are contrasted with a majority of poor people living and working in physically or socially and economically confined spaces. These are people who have to live in a certain locality, which means that they are bound up with its scarce resources or resources that have been depleted altogether (the residents of dying Russian monotonowns). Finally, there is yet another problem: capital, workforce, knowledge and information are in a state of flux. The same applies to the biosphere with its mineral resources, forests, rivers, seas and oceans. They too are in a state of "motion," but their "motions" are governed by entirely different laws of nature. Today networks, resources and localities are interrelated processes in reality. This means that they are interrelated in theory too. These processes need to be reflected in a system of notions.

"Resource" As a Relative Notion

For a start let us deal with the meaning of resource as the commonweal by defining its social importance (value). Declarations to the effect that "Russia is exceptionally rich in resources" are primarily designed for the televiewer. The pertinent question is what kind of resources is meant. Are they natural, intellectual, infrastructural or other resources? Another question concerns whether they are ready for use or whether they will yet have to be produced or mined.

Just as in all of my previous works I use in this article an environmental or contextual approach. A resource as such is simply an abstraction, and without "rising from the abstract to the concrete" (i.e., to concrete forms and conditions of its reproduction, including the distribution and consumption of the end product) a resource is "a thing in itself." It is only possible to discuss the value of resources as such in the context of a system of national priorities and global rela-

tions. However, we need to define: What value is meant and who is its beneficiary? We can only pinpoint a relative and constantly changing value. For that purpose suffice it to see how the global market is being transformed depending on demand and supply in the United States or any other country of the developed world. But there is also a host of other factors determining the market value of a resource today: it depends on whether the country in question has stockpiles of the resource. Other factors include cartel or other relevant agreements, and geopolitical, military and other conflicts. But the main factor is the strategy of market players who can depress (a “bear” market) or boost (a “bull” market) the value of a resource in line with their long-term interests. If a certain resource such as oil is potentially available to a country this is meaningless unless people know how to extract and transport it. In theory the resource does exist, but in reality it is nonexistent and is unlikely to be available in the near future if only because nobody knows how much of it will be lost during production and transportation. A resource remains “a thing in itself” unless it interacts with the market. That is the reason why the futures market and other forms of “trading the future” are so important. There is also a scientific, technological and logistic side to the issue: it is important to know who, where and when will develop marketable rather than experimental technologies for the production of energy from alternative sources and its transportation.

At least five conclusions can be drawn in this connection. First, the cost of any resource is the function of a constantly changing market. For instance, China is keen to buy quite a varied range of resources—both available and those that will be developed in the future. This is seen from the fact that China has given Russia a loan in exchange for oil supplies from Russia at a fixed price over many years ahead. Second, this market itself is the function of complex geopolitical relations and plans formulated by global players. Third, the production of a resource as an end product (consumer cost) depends on a variety of other policies like policies concerning science, housing utilities, transport, etc.³ The fourth point is very important: it is not known for certain if the population is ready to make its contribution to efforts to save energy, develop the industry of alternative sources of energy and the like. Finally, the fifth point: the cost of a resource, including its consumer cost, is the function of the geopolitical strategies of international corporations and states expressing their long-term geopolitical interests. Hence, a “resource” is a derivative of geopolitics. This means that defining the notion of resource as an invariable commonweal is a utopia, something that Halford Mackinder, the founding father of geopolitics, noted as far back as the early 20th century.⁴

So far we have taken “a bird’s-eye view” of the situation describing it from the standpoint of global market players. Those who are responsible for energy supplies to the population have been global market players for a long time now. This means that market fluctuations coupled with unbridled appetites of market players (these are “natural monopolies”—incidentally, it would be interesting to know who has provided a scientifically sound definition of this concept) always result in growing consumer prices and transport and utilities tariffs as relevant

figures of the past decade demonstrate. Moreover, the gap (as for the degree of complexity, the number of variables, unpredictability of monopolies' appetites, the corruption component, "kickbacks" and other imponderable parameters which do not lend themselves to rational calculation) between the real process of price formation and the ability of individuals to accept this mechanism is so wide that the population sees each rise in tariffs as a natural calamity. There can be no rational explanation in this case. The population is well aware of the fact that "natural monopolies" keep only their own interests in mind.

We can see two competing ideologies within the ruling elite: modernization ("Go, Russia, Go!") versus conservatism as the ideology of the ruling party. This reflects a split within Russian society: there is a minority of individuals who are aware of the urgent need for modernization (most likely of the mobilization type) and there is a majority consisting of part of the elite and a service class catering to the elite (the term embraces intellectuals, the show business and some of the law-enforcement bodies, the so-called "*siloviki*"). These people do not want any change...

Some analysts regard the period following the breakup of the Soviet Union as a natural "dumping of ballast," i.e., the resources that the ruling elite sees as waste: "redundant" territory, "redundant" science and a "redundant" system of disseminating scientific knowledge. The period has been marked by the destruction of whole industries and rejection of any form of self-government from below and independent public activity. The most educated and active section of the population has shrunk (either as a result of deliberate efforts on the part of the authorities or of their own accord). This has resulted in nearly all promising Russian scientists landing abroad. Each year the country's population has been shrinking by almost one million. The state and society generally have become more "simplified" and rigidly organized and for that reason less stable. More than that—as it turns out, it is possible to buy the right not to comply with the law, its bylaws and a multitude of codes (instructions). In other words, resources that had a high value only yesterday today are ballast and "waste."

Finally, another forcible revision of the prices of available resources was done by means of the privatization process (through the introduction of the voucher). To start with, they were depreciated through bankruptcies; then they were bought up at low prices and only after that did they show a sharp rise in price again.

What Kind of Knowledge Is a Resource?

Knowledge generated by science is the most important resource. It is disseminated through networks and mastered by people and organizations. As a result, the world becomes "more ecological." Those are generally accepted notions. The key question, though, is what *kind* of knowledge are we talking about? So far I have been talking about it is top-down knowledge circulation model: science studies things, 'laypersons' learn what science has to say. Eco-

logical knowledge regulates their culture. In other words, this is an enlightenment model: vertical knowledge: science studies things, "common folks" learn what science has to say. Ecological knowledge regulates their culture. In other words, this is an educational model. Essentially, it is a prescriptive model of interaction between science and society because the latter is regarded as consisting of slow-witted people and ignoramuses. This model of science-society relations is called a deficit model.

But, first, we must bear in mind the fact that there are many scientific theories. Second, what scientists discuss in their inner circle and what they propagandize or teach in public are totally different things. Third, as the 2009 summit on climate change in Copenhagen has demonstrated, science is dependent on the market, the business community and corporate interests. Fourth, and what is most important, is that local communities have different views on concrete problems or conflicts, the much-discussed greenhouse effect or gas and diesel fuel prices being two cases in point.⁵ For that reason the "rationality" of opinions and decisions should rather be qualified as culturally motivated ones.⁶

I feel a little digression will be in order here. In the past decade sociologists have been carried away by a constructivist approach to the understanding of social reality. This approach is in effect a generalized form of the enlightenment paradigm of relations between science and society. But where will we be in five to ten years when China, India and Brazil followed by Russia unambiguously embark on a path that should take them to European consumption standards? In the near future these billion-strong "local communities" are bound to trigger a gigantic shortage of available resources, which in turn will push up their prices. To bring prices down it will be necessary to introduce colossal scientific and technological innovations, reeducation of millions of people around the world in order to teach them new skills (or, on the contrary, the refusal to do it). Geopolitical conflicts will spread to new areas and so on. On the other hand, a consumption standard is associated with the life standard, which includes education among other things. Given that Russian standards are a far cry from European standards, 2009 saw too many students taking courses of study whereas there was a shortage of teachers, which meant a limited "educational resource."⁷ Yaroslav Kuzminov feels that in a couple of years "a significant part of the country's technological, teachers-training and agrarian universities and colleges will be left without students, including even students supported from the national budget."⁸ So what happens if Russia gets involved in a race for European standards? That is the price that will be paid if the relative nature of the notion of "resource" is underestimated.

But let us get back to the issue of local knowledge. Works on sociology and social anthropology treat local knowledge from the point of view of its ontological status as nonprofessional knowledge, the knowledge gained by lay persons. These people have a right to air their views and be heeded. This kind of knowledge should be taken into account in ecological decision-making no matter whether they are taken locally or worldwide.⁹ Special scales have been developed to gauge how far the process of translating this knowledge 'to the top'

approaches the ideal of democratic participation.¹⁰ In other words, local knowledge has been interpreted as something that has taken root and in this sense it is closer to tradition and “way of life” than to scientific knowledge as such. A different point of view implies that, strictly speaking, this kind of knowledge is nonexistent at a time of globalization—it always depends on the situation, i.e., it always results from the concentration of global forces (flows) in a particular “place.” However, any well-established situation might well change before long in a cardinal way.

To sum up, irrespective of the territorial scale of any community local knowledge is impossible to define only as traditional knowledge (resulting from the mental crystallization of the population’s everyday activity over many years in definite natural and geographic conditions) or only as situational knowledge, which defies a rational assessment. This kind of knowledge persists (is replicated) but continuously changes under the impact of many local and global forces. In practical terms this means that local knowledge results from interaction between flows and localities; it has a complex “procedural” structure and as such it should be used in local planning. It shifts the scientific basis of decision-making from the *in vitro* situation to the *in vivo* situation. It democratizes their procedures. It is economically cheaper and helps soft-pedal an unfair distribution of environmental risks in regions and smaller localities.

Local knowledge is not simply an “aggregate information.” It is a process formulating meanings in a concrete local context. Vladimir Vernadsky wrote nearly a hundred years ago that coercive policies with regard to the nationalities’ question were “largely kept alive by virtue of the fact that Russian society and the government did not have an adequate knowledge of *local life*, specific local features and the national life of Russia’s ethnic groups. The fullest possible *knowledge and understanding associated with it* are the best cementing method and the best source of unity... More intensive scientific work concerning local or national life makes it possible to use the spiritual strength of the people to a degree that is not achievable in a unitary centralist organization. A local center uses and brings to life spiritual forces which otherwise cannot be set in motion.”¹¹ As a modern-day Russian researcher has aptly put it, a resonance of the “soil” and “metaphysics” creates the nation.

In other words, the local population including its communities and groups of activists should be viewed as a social actor taking part in the process of generating knowledge “about the place and for the place.” They should also be regarded as participants in the formation of the culture of “the place.” Moreover, they should be seen as a partner of high science in the process of scientific production. This means that the local population is a custodian of culture. It has the knowledge and know-how needed for the development of scientific doctrines and practical recommendations.

In methodological terms this statement corresponds to an essential principle of the sociology of social knowledge, namely “follow the actor.”¹² I have analyzed ecological debates in Russia over the past 100 years to demonstrate that they took place even at the time of the Great Terror, but a breakthrough to new

ideas has always been followed by backtracking and toughening of the power vertical.¹³ This being so, it would be a mistake to interpret the ecological fears and concerns of the local population as “emotions,” “false perception” or a manifestation of the crowd phenomenon. In fact they are an important source of understanding the social world in which we live. Among other things a study of such emotions helps understand the local constructs of the meanings of everyday life, especially when they are shaped in an alien and even hostile context.¹⁴

In a narrower sense local knowledge is the local population's reaction to the utilitarianist (consumerist) trend in current modernization, resource-saving technologies being one example (sparing farming methods and others). This reaction represents the local population's attempt at self-preservation. At a time of widespread “collective irresponsibility” (Ulrich Beck) the population tied to a “place” has to speak up on behalf of its life-support environment and its safety. If its voice is to be heard the population needs to unite in the form of civic initiatives and social movements or interact with existing ecological and other public organizations, both professional organizations and those that have been organized along ethnic principles, such as associations of indigenous peoples.¹⁵ This means that it would be correct to position social initiatives and public movements as a key mechanism generating local knowledge, including socioecological knowledge.

Resources, Networks, Ecosystems

Resources, networks and ecosystems are interrelated notions. Networks are needed to transport, process, exchange and sell resources. The exploration and production of resources create an infrastructure and settlements changing natural ecosystems. These, in turn, lose their natural qualities, i.e., natural resources. Consequently, resources have to be produced by artificial methods or extracted elsewhere. This requires other resources and networks linking them. Another important point is the emergence of commonly-owned and privately-owned resources (initially they belonged to clans or communities) and also overt and covert resources. Networks are going through similar processes. Covert networks exchanging resources and information have become a most valuable resource in its own right. Another factor is no less important: at a certain stage in history networks responsible for the production and exchange of information—both overt and covert—turned into a social institution. It is noteworthy that as far as the link between these processes and Nature and territory is concerned, initially the production of resources required by people and their processing and consumption were located in one place or several places in close proximity to one another. But with the passage of time trade networks and other associated processes of exchange grew in importance and the market turned into a key institution for the exchange of material and information resources. As the market underwent a process of expansion it constantly assessed and reassessed separate territories and even whole continents with the result that some localities,

towns and even whole countries began specializing in the production of one or several types of resources. Competition for resources and territories became one of the aims of state policy. Later it provided the basis for the emergence of geopolitical interests: first, local interests and then regional ones. When it became apparent that the globe has its limits it provided the basis for global interests. Today the struggle for world domination has shifted to outer space or, to be more exact, to the biosphere.

Two most important events have taken place over the past 100 years. First, resource production sites, the making of the end product and their consumption as well as the management of the entire "life mechanism" have become completely independent from one another. The distance between the oil well and the gas station is no longer important—the so-called inversion of space has taken place. The other event is characterized by the formation of a financial and economic market existing independently from any concrete territory and the end consumer. Electronic trading networks are the basis of this market; today they control the global "life mechanism" in the world. So far science has not studied thoroughly the functioning of this "mechanism" and for that reason people, corporations and whole states instantly amass a lot of wealth and power while others lose nearly everything. It is fair to assume that access to its networks is tantamount to access to global levers of power and influence.

What has been achieved as a result of these and many other processes? I have repeatedly noted that a qualitatively new ecosystem has taken shape over twenty years. It is different from the one that was represented by the Soviet Union and its closest and faraway satellite countries.

I treat the notion of ecobiosociotechnological system (ecosystem for short) as a link of the country's vitally important centers between themselves and between these centers and the surrounding environmental and social landscapes (the "centers" are nodes or landscapes where the resources vitally important for the existence of an ecosystem are stockpiled, reproduced and processed, and then transported through networks). An ecosystem is a separate and relatively self-sufficient entity, but it is built into the rest of the world through direct and reverse flows of resources. An ecosystem of this type (a macrosystem) might be a traditional or modern one. It might be a stable system or a system going through a process of transformation (a "transition" system), capable of modernization or subject to stagnation or something like that. But the most important aspect is its isolation from the outside world and its permanent ability to replicate itself for a long time. As a rule, such an ecosystem is identified with a state, but in fact it is much wider because its financial, resource and information ties go far beyond the state borders. Needless to say, there are qualitatively different ecosystems: states like China, which are completely built into the world's flows of resources, and completely isolated countries (North Korea).

An ecosystem might be asymmetrical and lopsided: we join European resource networks in one way, but we join Asian networks in another way. An ecosystem might expand peacefully or by means of military expansion. Be that as it may, individuals (a small group), an organization (a nongovernmental orga-

nization or a corporation) or the state or suprastate organizations form the nucleus of an ecosystem. The availability of resource territory, natural wealth and human resources which have knowledge and skills—is the main condition of the maintenance of an ecosystem. What is crucially important, however, is the availability of networks linking all that together.

Driven by curiosity, a thirst for knowledge or wealth, individuals or states have over the centuries sought to advance their interests far beyond the borders of their territories. In this sense globalization has been known as a socioeconomic phenomenon for many years and the age of great geographic discoveries is a fair demonstration of this point. The reader will have noticed that my understanding of ecosystems is a far cry from the traditional interpretation adopted by the founding fathers of the Chicago School of Human Ecology back in the 1920s through 1940s.

What is the advantage of the ecosystem approach? Social and economic history and modern diplomacy for that matter normally analyze only relations between countries and nations (domination and subjugation, negotiations, adoption of constitutions, declarations and the like), i.e., they adopt the so-called relational approach, which builds and classifies their configurations (graphs). By contrast, we want to draw attention to the real mechanisms of such relations with their territorial, resource and communicative components. Moreover, we take into account not only the formal behavior of states and governments but also the role played by what might appear to be less prominent but far more effective actors in the establishment and destruction of ecosystems. As the authors of actor-network theory rightly point out, individuals, organizations, knowledge, events and other factors may play the role of actors. They too can generate meanings through interaction.¹⁶ As a matter of fact, I have been saying well-known truths: all those aspects are studied individually, but I feel that the ecosystem approach, as it is defined here, may give a more detailed and comprehensive picture of the mechanisms underlying the establishment of a global world.

The relative stability of the “authorities-civil society” system in Russia is currently prevalent in Russia is based on terms of a social contract: “We the authorities give the majority of the population minimal life benefits provided they comply with a host of rules and restrictions imposed from above. As for the minority, we offer them a comfortable life without any restrictions apart from those that they choose to impose on themselves. Both are free to live in exchange for political loyalty to the supreme authorities.”

“The Boomerang Effect” and Space Transformation

U. Beck introduced the notion of “boomerang” in sociology in 1992: in the absence of support by the people and the lack of proper care of infrastructure they begin to fall apart and release the disintegration energy in the form of massive migration and flows of forcible displaced persons. They also result in a growing number of breakdowns and technogenic disasters. This energy then

descends on localities and transforms into social-territorial communities and currents within the “body” of a socioecological organization and has a variety of effects on it. In some cases newcomers form ethnonational communities which oust or conflict with local communities for resources and power. In other cases newcomers form the basis of criminal structures fanning crime and supporting drug trafficking and illegal trade in commodities and people. They also form permanent enclaves of their own culture and lifestyles or else they penetrate local and regional administrative bodies, establish their rules of the game and the like. This results in a growing conflict between native and newly arrived communities thereby boosting the role of agencies of the Emergency Situations Ministry and increasing their numbers. This, in turn, increases their demand for various resources. The general trend comes down to the following: the slower the process of modernization in the sphere of production and the armed forces as well as in the political sphere the more resources the Emergency Situations Ministry requires and the more multifarious its functions become.

Stronger or Weaker?

Whether we regard a new ecosystem stronger or weaker than the previous one depends on how we understand its stability. Here are some of the typical views on the subject:

- 1) It should maintain the territorial integrity of the state above all through appropriate support for its army, security services and law-enforcement bodies, i.e., the so-called “*siloviki*” structure;
- 2) It should preserve manageability through the maintenance of the power vertical;
- 3) It should maintain stability through a set of measures preventing an eruption of mass protests;
- 4) It should ensure modernization in the form of technological renovation;
- 5) It should be able to react to geopolitical challenges.

More of the same could be cited, but the pertinent question is what resources and networks have to do with all that.

It is fair to conclude that the new Russian ecosystem is weaker than the previous one, because of the country’s territory has shrunk, the EU and other geopolitical giants now find themselves closer to Russian borders, the intellectual potential has dropped, crisis spots permanently crop up across the country (accidents, disasters and ethnopolitical and other conflicts), the Armed Forces and other “*siloviki*” structures are in a critical state and there is a prevalence of “hands-on” forms of government. The question, though, is what can be considered an ecosystem proper in the case of Russia.

To my mind, in this case it is possible to recognize a ‘fusion’ of power with ownership as an ecosystem. It has privatized the bulk of the resources vitally

needed for the reproduction of the population and measures to ensure security and modernization. Moreover, this ecosystem has shed the burden of responsibility for and aid to satellites and former Union republics; also it no longer feels responsible for the preservation and development of society. Soviet sociologist German Diligensky divided needs into needs for physical and social existence. Today the Russian state meets a minimum of needs for the physical existence of the majority of the population (excluding such people as hoaxed interest holders, tramps, and homeless children, to name just a few). But the Russian state all but ignores needs for social existence and does not allocate resources for them. That, then, is the form of the social contract the state has imposed on the majority. Moreover, while introducing the monetary form of providing for the majority, the state has absolved itself of responsibility for control of the movement of the resources, to say nothing of the virtual absence of public consumption funds. "Yes," it says, "we have given you the money, but whether you have received it and whether you have the medicines you need—those are your problems." That is the ethical norm of monetary relations between the state and civil society. The above-mentioned fusion is becoming more integrated and closer while civil society is growing ever weaker.

The form of the social contract mentioned before (the population's loyalty to power structures in exchange for a minimal provision of material benefits) in effect separates the authorities from society. To be more exact, the authorities are surrounding themselves with a community they need. This community caters to their needs and protects them. It lives by entirely different laws than the majority of the country's population. This stratum is very difficult to identify, considering that it is entirely based on the internal laws of this community which have nothing in common with written laws. It is cemented by mutual protection, sleaze targeted against one another, pervasive involvement in criminal activities, corruption, elitist clubs and trade in arms and explosives. By a twist of irony all of these are hidden in the depth of civil society, but that society has not the slightest idea of their existence until the time comes for an explosion or terrorist act. Members of the "fusion" hide themselves among ordinary people, but these people are the first to suffer when one of the groupings begins to destroy another one.

Secretiveness is the only weak point of this "fusion." But what could we mean by "secretiveness," considering that this isolated community may have assumed global proportions? I can only draw the reader's attention to the obvious: in the past twenty years Russia has turned into a country of fences built around private mansions and other possessions and around pipe stretching over thousands of kilometers and other flows of resources essential for the maintenance of established order. However, *flows of money* are even more important. The rest could be converted to oil, gas or other natural resources or transformed into workforce flows or into the loyalty of insiders or political support by outsiders. The general principle is that "money likes silence." Money flows need to be reliably protected if such an atmosphere is to be created. In short, Russia is turning into a system of autonomous and reliably protected "nuclei" connected through a system of resource corridors.

But the problem is that each “fence” has a vulnerable hole that could let any resources through (one case in point is the growing number of instances of oil being siphoned off from trunk pipelines). What is even worse, though, is the “fusion” of “whites” and “grays,” wars, collapsing depots of arms and ammunition, illegal arms trade, and drug trafficking. The most important aspect of it all is that a huge mass of unaccounted money moving around Russia has turned it into a powder keg with the result that no locality is protected against an explosion, murder or burglary.

The authorities are keen to set up institutions replicating themselves, notably a reserve of cadres catering to the authorities’ needs. A look at even part of the list of prospective cadres already made public will reveal almost no smart (“egg-headed”) people. Nor does it contain independent public figures. It is fair to state, therefore, that an *isolated* institution to form a *nomenklatura* that harks back to Soviet times has been set up. The fact that the ruling party has long since become the main institution reproducing stability by replicating the *nomenklatura* hardly deserves mention. The *nomenklatura* sets up a network of friends and relatives who, in turn, build a network of friends, and the process goes on and on. The result is an ecology of known people, i.e., an isolated community.

The primary source of destabilization making for shaky stability is oil and gas prices in world markets, something that cannot be forecast in principle. It is obvious that we have been living in conditions of stability dependent on several factors. It is interesting to note that the West is reducing its dependence on hydrocarbons while Russia is building new oil and gas pipelines. This too is a form of shoring up the *nomenklatura*: pipelines require a growing number of managers, engineers, builders, repairmen and especially guards all loyal to the authorities. Such people are in fact nomads, people without roots. The army, whose job is to defend their country, will take a lot of time to reform. Meanwhile, the army protecting corporate interests is showing stable growth as it knits with the oil-gas elite.

It is obvious that the oil-and-gas infrastructure is a double-edged weapon: we penetrate the West to take up positions there. The West does the same with regard to us. After we agree on a set of conditions with the West it suddenly alters them unilaterally as soon as it feels they are no longer beneficial to it. Russia today is an energy superpower, but tomorrow it may become a resource appendage of two giants—China and the European Union. This rigid network structure is developing much faster than networks for human communication. Moreover, it is shaping Russia’s new ecology—pipe-net ecology—inasmuch as it embraces financial, material and manpower flows, the entire construction and assembly complex, the networks of camps and makeshift housing for rotation workers, etc. The existing territorial division of Russia has in the past reflected albeit in a small degree some specific features of the natural landscape and the way of life of ethnonational communities associated with it. Today it has diminishing importance in comparison with the new pipe ecology. Attempts by ecologists to create an “echo-net,” i.e., a system of forests and landscapes essential for the reproduction of the country’s natural ecosystem have so far remained on paper.

There are also purely geopolitical indicators demonstrating the changes that the country has undergone as an ecosystem. First, the role of the countries that used to be part of the Soviet Union has become much more important. Their pressure on the political-economic and cultural-demographic spheres of Russia's state structure makes it incumbent on the ruling circles to provide massive resources to maintain the country's territorial integrity. Second, Russia's peripheral regions, notably the Caucasus and the Far East, have lately turned into an arena of potential conflicts. The drawn-out destabilization of the political situation in the Caucasus has compelled significant numbers of local youths to take up arms as a normal way of life rather than engage in constructive activities. This is not the source of the energy of disintegration that has been mentioned before. Now it is the energy of hatred, violence and destruction. What we are seeing is an explosive situation where advocates of traditionalism and barbarity are equipped with advanced types of weapons. This situation has weakened the ecosystemic character of Russian society.

Another side of the same process is the demise of the older generation—authors, actors and independent public figures, a community of the Russian culture of the 19th and 20th centuries. The situation appears to be all the more serious, considering that the last intermediaries bringing that high culture, values, language and forms of communication to the masses are disappearing. Enlighteners and missionaries building a link between epochs and generations are leaving the scene. The link formed the foundation of the ecology of 20th-century society through culture and its media (textbooks, films, lectures and radio programs). The debates on falsification of history being foisted on people living in Russia have dealt another blow to this link. I agree with the view that comprehending Russia's history is an endless process, but it should unite the majority of the population instead of turning into a court trial dividing society into innocents and guilty ones. Collapsing “book culture” is also leaving the scene. “Postbook” culture¹⁷ is taking its place. This culture has entirely different laws of existence: people who read books and those living in and by the Internet are people of a different mentality.

Be that as it may, the fact that the Soviet Union won the 1941-1945 war is no longer an indisputable instrument of integration supporting a national system of values. The latest three generations cannot perceive that victory in the same way as it is perceived by the older generation. Authoritative public figures capable of reacting to questions asked by young people are absent from the public arena. “Pipe-net ecology” cannot possibly be an instrument of cultural integration. This kind of “ecology” only promotes integration between the *nomenklatura* and its service class on the basis of values of an elitist consumer society. This kind of ecology starts from fortress homes, helipads, autonomous life-support systems and heavy security and ending with “a framework of power-wielding agencies” strapping the country. It is a supranational framework—I have in mind the agreement on cooperation among national power-wielding structures under the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The ecology of natural habitats and basins has given way to the ecology of rigid frameworks and their nuclei which

regard Nature only as one of the consumer resources. The many Russian young people who have joined a global context appear to be more “advanced” than the powers that be. The most important thing is that the young have been joining communities outside the official system in both of its aspect—sconservative and modernized.

Wearing Slippers and Cell Phones, but Having Roots Too

“Lean body and fitness to move, light dress and sneakers, cellular telephones (invented for the use of the nomad who needs to be ‘constantly in touch’), portable or disposable belongings—are the prime cultural tokens of the era of instantaneity... The advent of instantaneity ushers human culture and ethics into unmapped and unexplored territory where most of the learned habits of coping with the business of life have lost their utility and sense.” Rational choice in the era of instantaneity means “to pursue gratification while avoiding the consequences, and particularly the responsibilities which such consequences may imply.”¹⁸

It is not as simple as that! In reality those cultural tokens do not even cover the entire wealthy community. Rather they belong to those of them who in one way or another are associated with financial and information flows. But how about all those who are associated with resources limited to a particular territory, resources that are today the subject of a desperate struggle? If we discuss the question in line with Bauman’s liquid modernity logic we must assume that the time may come very soon when there will be no point in going anywhere: either the whole territory will be polluted with waste (after all, you have to “avoid the consequences”) or the resources will be completely depleted. As a matter of fact, that is what happened to a section of the wealthy minority—they have lost their assets in the current crisis. In this situation sneakers and cell phones will not help.

There is a more important side to it. Bauman has noted on several occasions that the rich would like to see “fewer” poor people living around them. How shall we describe the poverty-stricken majority? Are they citizens onto themselves or people who have dropped out of “the civil society” category? There are “friends” and “foes” in Russia. Who are the people that are deprived of rights and are engaged in slave labor? How does this phenomenon of “slave localism” (sociologists have invented the euphemism “*exclusia*” for this particular case) relate to processes called globalization, modernization and informatization?

U. Beck takes issue with the ideology of “pervading irresponsibility” based on the theory of postmodernism. He speaks of the need for a critical theory which would study “contradictions, dilemmas and the unseen and unwanted (unintentional) side-effects of a modernity which is becoming increasingly cosmopolitan (global).”¹⁹ As long as they and their networks and ties are “hidden” in the body of nation-states it is hard to find and oppose them.

If we turn to Russian experience we will see that in the past twenty years the West has been sowing “the seeds of democracy” in Russia, but in fact it has been

implementing a program of “vertical glocalization” by selecting and financing only what accords with its concept of a proper civil society. An endless stream of initiatives has been coming from below (naïve Russians have been applying for grants and in exchange giving away their intellectual resource to Western foundations for free). However, the West has been financing only projects living up to the criteria of the seeds of democracy program. Western ideologists campaigning for the introduction of democracy in Russia have been “cultivating” samples without funding the development of networks connecting them. Politically-oriented projects have been the least of their concerns. The West has been aiming to create model “islands of democracy” where executives would act in accordance with rules prescribed from outside. In other words, the executives would be expected to comply with a prescribed “algorithm” to a maximum degree. That is where the reproduction of their social resource ended. In a hostile economic and political environment they have not gained the personal experience enabling them to convert local rules to generally accepted ones. Nor have they worked out rules of the game of their own. They have not established strong ties among themselves. That is why, as could be expected, most of those islands (the so-called model projects) have been bogged down in a quagmire of bureaucratic red tape, corruption and a thirst for instant wealth. Even the right social technologies protecting the natural environment and helping social self-organization are not viable in an alien and unprepared environment. Let us recall some of the forgotten words of the Soviet era “implantation,” “pusher.” Water moccasins only come in handy when they belong to an activist, a fighter. Only a couple of years ago activists realized that their social capital (resource) can only grow through everyday struggle for their inalienable rights and network interaction with reliance on the population. The question is what sort of population are we talking about?

A Global Network Civil Society Is Inevitable

To sum up, the organism constructed by authorities *cum* proprietors who possess key sources of resources for self-sufficiency for the most part operates to reproduce its own closed structure, isolated from civil society. It has designed a system of networks precisely for this purpose. On the one hand, they protect it, but on the other, destroy the old cultural basis, the cultural code. Suffice it to say that the 2009 influx of a foreign workforce served to preserve the size of the country's population. As they seek to achieve their only aim—to build up their wealth—“the ecosystem of the rich” is ousting the indigenous population and changing the country's entire social geography. This means that like a closed circuit a closed ecosystem may ultimately become an extra- and supranational system: its networks will turn into isolated communities supplying it with resources and protected by an army of private security guards who are in fact mercenaries. At the same time “localities” (unique natural and cultural landscapes) will turn into makeshift camps of rotating workers turned nomads. This is something more than “manageable chaos” as some Western theorists like to describe the Russian

situation. It is a rigid transnational structure going through a pulpy human material with a low social potential. Time was when the image of the Soviet Union as a human figure being tightened by iron girds was quite popular. Today it is rather the image of an iron mesh spreading through Russia's entire body.

There is only one way for an atomized Russian civil society to revive and preserve its identity—by creating its own legal networks and their nuclei. This would have to be a very hard albeit long struggle to regain the human rights and freedoms it once had. This will be a very hard struggle indeed, because no meaningful support is expected to come from any quarter. “The authorities-proprietors” system is making every effort to resist it inside Russia while transnational corporations and monopolies with an eye on Russian resources are bringing pressure to bear from outside.

We sociologists are often told the following: “You do see that the population is passive—it does not protest. This means that its creative potential has been exhausted. Where are powerful social movements along the lines of the late 1980s?” The cliché reply to the effect that “the population's loyalty to the ‘authorities-proprietors’ system has been paid for by the state” is not really adequate. First, people are protesting all the time—Russia's map is dotted with “pinpoint protests,” but they are ignored because of the lack of access to the main media. At best they are reported in primetime TV programs when the prime minister himself goes to “sort out” the situation. Besides, the system is built in such a way that nearly any social protest may be qualified as extremism or violence or resistance to law-enforcement bodies, which triggers actions of cautionary intimidation. Second, the entire social potential of the movements of the *perestroika* era shifted into power structures. Later many disenchanted people left those structures to set up structures of civil society as a matter of urgency, but it was too late. Third, the authorities deliberately see no difference between extremist actions and peaceful demonstrations. In this situation Russian sociologists and political scientists bear part of the blame: they have almost excluded the study of social movements from their plans of research. They are doing almost nothing to explain to the general public the nature of these movements as one of the components of the modernization process. By contrast, the scientific community in the West has been studying the link between the two for more than seventy years.²⁰

Russian researchers have taken the cue from politicians who have introduced legislation to deprive any form of dissent of a means of airing unorthodox views in public. There is no doubt that the most important aspect of it is that social movements generate communities which can later direct their energies toward changing the existing ecosystem. Rallies and the blocking of roads are only the first manifestations of a public protest. Today social movements around the world are fairly well organized by professionals and fulfill a multitude of functions—from educational functions to drafting the agenda for the future. From my point of view, people who have a genuine desire to modernize Russia need to be looked for in that particular milieu. For some reason Russian sociologists ignore the fact that the empire that used to be called the Soviet Union was restructured precisely in that way.

Where is the way out anyway? If the world is becoming globalized, this means that civil society is becoming universal. It is the only force we can rely on. There is no place for illusions in this case: by international standards apart from local communities, groups of activists and public movements civil society includes private corporations, political parties, interest groups and small business. World experience demonstrates that this is the only real way to strengthen Russian civil society. The stronger its networks will be the more stable it will be and the greater benefits to society it will yield. As for whether civil society will be able to safeguard national interests and support the national bourgeoisie and Russian science without harming the general trend of globalization is a problem that civil society itself will have to worry about.

I would like to stress once again that what is needed is much more than a union of educated citizens. According to a ten-year study conducted by the London School of Economics and Political Sciences titled *Global Civil Society*,²¹ the abovementioned “*exclusia*” is gradually uniting around the world, including the ethnic communities of Latin America, peasants and farmers, migrants and forcibly displaced persons, people deprived of rights and jobs, the sort of “redundant” people whom Bauman has described as “waste forever.”²²

For example, here are a few concrete issues that researchers studying the global city are concerned about:

- 1) What are the possible forms of political and civic associations covering disadvantaged people in global cities?
- 2) To what extent does the presence of immigrant communities generate specific transnational forms of such associations? Also, what is the extent of such presence that makes it possible for such associations to give disparate groups of immigrants a sense of a global diaspora?
- 3) How far does access to the new mass media, especially to the Internet, allow other groups (such as organizations of poverty-stricken women) to trans-nationalize their efforts?
- 4) What are possible forms of interaction between groups of “disadvantaged” people and global corporate authorities?
- 5) What contribution do these multiple activities and ties make to the denationalization of the global city and how far do they help form more global forms of consciousness and concepts concerning such notions as “membership” and “identity?”²³

These questions go beyond theory. A panel study conducted in twenty countries over twenty years has revealed the following fact: the bigger the number of international nongovernmental ecological organizations working in any particular country the lower the level of the contamination of its waters.²⁴ The Forest Stewardship Council operating in the Russian Federation for more than five years whose job is the voluntary certification of the forest business²⁵ is a positive example of such activity by international nongovernmental organizations in Russia.

Conclusion

The idea of Joseph Stieglitz that “globalization needs democratization” is not a utopia. It itself needs resources. The most important of them is the need to develop “smart” networks of global civil society. If Russian groups of activists, public organizations and nongovernmental organizations join the formation of this society, this will be the main condition of their preservation and strengthening as a social and political force. This will make for a greater intellectual potential of these cells and the network resource of civil society as a whole. This is also a real way for the economic and political modernization of Russian society and the creation of an essential theoretical and practical prerequisite for it—the focus of any activity shifting from government to governance and self-governance on the basis of a dialogue and a consensus between authorities and civil society.

But the way suggested here is not a panacea. The market economy has its civilizational limits; otherwise it would cease to be a market economy. This means that the struggle between “transnationals” and “locals” (in a broad sense of the terms), between the interests of “the network” and “localities” will continue in line with Bauman’s prediction. The market will always be seeking to buy both. This means that struggle is the only way to safeguard basic interests of civil society. It should be a struggle for the preservation of the meaning-forming significance of the notion of “the commonweal,” a struggle for an increased share of citizen experts and their independent professional communities in scientific and technological innovations and political modernization processes, for civil society’s relative autonomy from the state.

Another challenge to the process of strengthening global network civil society is its permanent reassessment of the value of territories and biospheric resources with a consequent change in geopolitical interests and a resultant change in transnational industries and infrastructures. Today’s struggle is for hydrocarbon markets; tomorrow its focus may shift to a struggle for access to clean water or the industrial production of it. Then it may well shift to outer space and so on. The reassessment will be made by people themselves, not only by monopolies. Today most of them do it in line with the values of consumer society, but tomorrow this trend may change. Already there are zones and networks of nihilism and barbarity as well as alter-globalism operating in the centers of this society. Their mobile representatives communicate through secret channels. They are just as malicious in their bid to destroy historical monuments as they are destroying the thin threads binding human relations. It is noteworthy that sociologists have a fairly good understanding of the peculiarities of the networks and resources of shady and criminal business and have offered an adequate interpretation of them, but they have yet to study the motives, networks and resources of present-day mass barbarity and vandalism.

Finally, a global civil society is taking shape at a time when one generation is replacing another. Scholars have yet to find out what resources and networks today’s “push-button children” will have tomorrow, considering that they are expected to remodel this society once again.

As for the “science-practice” relationship, or to be more exact, the “science—civil society” relationship, the old (vertical) paradigm of sociological research—“science-practice”—is gradually giving way to the paradigm of “partnership” analysis when rigorism of accurate scientific analysis from above is blended with local perception, knowledge and action from below. More often than not the process of research now is performed in accordance with the following scheme: “incorporated observation—participative research—detached reflection.” Meanwhile, the overall production of social knowledge is increasingly becoming sociopolitical practice rather than production of “scientific facts.” In other words, it is nonpolitical politics. The glocality of such politics (with the focus on “locality”) is becoming a condition of the existence of democracy in the present-day world.

Today's sociologist should not be only a detached observer empirically testing his or other people's hypotheses. Still less can he be satisfied only by gauging “objects” such as the structure of public opinion, the intensity of a conflict or the reaction to environmental pollution. Today, the sociologist is faced with a much more difficult task: he must be an outsider and insider at the same time. He has to be capable of understanding the organized world of meanings which constitutes the social worlds of “localities” and their social order. In this situation the sociologist is a participative researcher rather than a detached observer. The overall sequence of steps taken by a humanitarian scientist operating on the basis of a model of cultural rationality is this: he realizes that social knowledge is generated by a discursive process; he is intent on getting a detailed understanding of the perception mechanism and the logic of action by the other side; he has compassion for the local population and he must reveal dominant meanings (they could be called the main frames). Only then does he organize participative research. I hope that interaction between both sides will revive, albeit in a different form, the ethical norm of 19th-century Russian science. It should be useful and beneficial to people.

NOTES

- ¹ Z. Bauman, *Wasted Lives. Modernity and Its Outcasts*, Cambridge, 2004, p. 18.
- ² Z. Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, Cambridge, 2004.
- ³ See, for example, *Obama's Plan to Stimulate the Economy, 2009*. Official Site of Barack Obama: <http://www.barackobama.com>.
- ⁴ H. Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality: A Study in the Politics of Reconstruction*, London, 1919.
- ⁵ A. Irwin and B. Wynne, eds., *Misunderstanding Science? The Public Reconstruction of Science and Technology*, Cambridge, 1996.
- ⁶ O. Yanitsky, “The Generation of Socioecological Knowledge. The Political and Cultural Aspect,” *Obshchestvennye nauki i sovremennost' (ONS)*, 2006, No. 6.
- ⁷ V. Inozemtsev, “Grievous Knowledge,” *Vedomosti*, 25.09.2009, p. A04.
- ⁸ Ya. Kuzminov, “Colleges and Universities after EGE,” *Vedomosti*, 09.09.2009, p. A04.
- ⁹ U. Beck, *Risk Society. Toward a New Modernity*, London, 1992; A. Irwin, *Sociology and Environment. A Critical Introduction to Society, Nature and Knowledge*, Maiden (MA), 2001.

- 10 P. Burstein, R. Einwohner, J. Hollander, "The Success of Political Movements: A Bargaining Perspective," J. Jenkins and B. Klandermans, eds., *The Politics of Social Protest*, Minneapolis (MN); London, 1996.
- 11 V. Vernadsky, *Publicist's Papers*, V. Volkov (ed.), M., 1995, p. 248 (in Russian).
- 12 A. Irwin, *Sociology and Environment*, p. 96.
- 13 O. Yanitsky, "The Shift of Environmental Debates in Russia," *Current Sociology*, 2009, vol. 57, No. 6.
- 14 O. Yanitsky, "The Environmental Movement in a Hostile Context. The Case of Russia," *International Sociology*, 1999, vol. 14, No. 2.
- 15 Th. Olsen, *International Zapatismo. The Construction of Solidarity in the Age of Globalization*, London, 2005.
- 16 H. White, *Identity and Control: How Social Formations Emerge*, Princeton (NJ), 2003.
- 17 M. Shugurov, "The New Identity. Man and Authorities in the Space of Post-Book Culture," *Svobodnaya mysl*, 2004, vol. 21, No. 3.
- 18 Z. Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, Cambridge, 2004, p. 128.
- 19 U. Beck, "The Analysis of Global Inequality: From National to Cosmopolitan Perspective," *Global Civil Society*, M. Kaldor, H. Anheier, M. Glasius (eds.), Oxford, 2003, p. 55.
- 20 Ch. Tilly, *Social Movements, 1768-2004*, London, 2004.
- 21 See, for instance: *Global Civil Society*, M. Kaldor, H. Anheier, M. Glasius (eds.).
- 22 Z. Bauman, *Wasted Lives. Modernity and Its Outcasts*.
- 23 S. Sassen, "Global Cities and Diasporic Networks," *Global Civil Society*, p. 420.
- 24 *Globalization and the Environment*, A. Jorgenson, E. Kick (eds.), Chicago (Ill.), 2009.
- 25 T. Yanitskaya, *Practical Guide to Identification of Forests of High Ecological Value in Russia*, Moscow, 2008 (in Russian).

Translated by Gennady Nikiforov