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Social and Cultural Transformations of the Russian Society and Modern Innovative Strategies from the Perspective of Synergetic Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The article dwells upon basic problems of social and cultural transformations of the Russian society and highlights the potential of synergetic dynamics of this process. A special stress is laid upon spiritual and moral objectives and goal-settings. The authors analyze macro- and microlevels of synergetic factors and their integrity as part of the modernization of the Russian society. This article also touches upon structural and functional approaches towards the analysis of synergetic processes; it studies various scenarios and strategies of the above-mentioned social and cultural transformations of the Russian society. Moreover, the authors consider traditional and innovative synergetic factors in modernization processes. Unparalleled attention is paid to the possible formation of new norms and regulations of social behaviour as synergetic dynamics determining the development of social systems. The authors analyze the role of religion in synergetic processes within the Russian spiritual traditions, define the connection between economic development and changes in basic social values. Within the article the study of the Russian society as a developing system has been conducted with the help of structural and functional analysis. Thereby, the authors present both theory and practice of the modernization process of modern societies as exemplified by the Russian society and perspectives of its further synergetic study.

Keywords: Synergetics, Transformations, Commune, Society, Innovations, Traditions, Evolution

JEL Classifications: Z00, Z10, Z11

1. INTRODUCTION

The study of social and cultural transformations of the Russian society during the 1990s and 2000s is connected with certain problems and intends to find answers to the following questions: "From where to what?" "what social and cultural level of the structural and functional society organisation should serve as the foundation for a new type of scientific and institutional development?" and "what kind of innovations can fulfill these objectives?"

Regarding key objectives of this research and the problems stated by its authors, a hypothetical answer to the above-mentioned questions will be as follows: From a low level of innovative culture towards innovative development (ID) (Orlova, 2004). Thus, the problem is a contradiction between the need for the innovative development model of the Russian society and dominating trends of social and cultural conservatism which is often misrepresented as liberalism.

It is worth mentioning that the current situation has been created artificially. The perestroika-mastermind A. Chubais acknowledged

2. METHODS

that “privatization from above” had not been aimed at solving existing economic problems; it had been intended for changing the social structure of Soviet and then the Russian society. In fact, this change solidified the position of the upper class which enriches itself by means of exploiting the lower one.

The social structure of the Russian society formed under this reformation does not correlate with any positive innovative changes. The upper class tries to preserve a status quo while the lower class feels nostalgic about pre-perestroika Russia that has been lost. Nowadays Russian left-wing politicians urge the Russian society to move forward and annihilate the current government in order to replace it with a more advanced state system that corresponds with Western traditions. In their opinion, the Russian social system should adopt social and cultural norms that are absolutely foreign to its identity.

However, the current social system cannot return to its initial steady state (left-wingers cannot idealize the Soviet period and right-wingers will not embrace the ideal of the pre-Soviet era) since people, their social and cultural organisation have drastically changed in comparison with the given periods. For instance, even the theories of social stratification developed by Western scholars cannot provide an adequate interpretation of the modern Russian society. Should the so-called New Russians be classified as the upper crust or the lowest criminals? Who are the members of the current middle class in Russia? Should low-paid state employees be included into this class? Can a talented, poor scientist be regarded as a member of the upper social class?

The Russian society demonstrates a dramatic example of a gap between powerful and wealthy social classes which prosper under the existing institutional conditions and other less fortunate classes. As a result, most members of the Russian society get marginalized both openly (impoverishment) and latently (the absence of social demand).

In either case, the structural and functional organization of the social life in Russia must be optimized in accordance with the model of innovative development. This process is considered to be a synergetic objective (Evgenieva and Titov, 2010).

The fulfillment of this objective is especially challenged by the fact that Russia is not integrated in the globalization processes and tries to find its own ways of social, economic and cultural development in conformity with geopolitics, cultural traditions, natural conditions and etc., (Voytsekhovich, 2007). However, the combination of the Russian distinctive development and its efficient role in globalization seems to be unrealistic. A choice should be made between forming proper development strategies in the setting of international isolation or coming into the global community as a constant “junior partner.”

Since the study of the Russian society is a complex process which is determined by the above-mentioned conditions, synergetic approach comes in handy for analyzing its current state and development prospective.

“Nowadays synergetics or the theory of self-organization is one of the most used interdisciplinary approaches. The term “synergetics” means “a joint action” in Greek. Hermann Haken introduced this term and used it in two different meanings. The first one stands for the theory of acquiring new features by a whole unity that consists of interactive objects. The latter means an approach that can be developed only by common efforts of people belonging to different professional spheres” (Synergetics, 2009. p. 4).

If the Russian society is analyzed in the context of microhistorical dynamics, then it becomes clear that its civilizational and cultural development seriously lacks “the arrow of time” (Prigozhin, 1999).

Speaking in the terms of synergetics, the authors have concluded that the Russian society is a dissipative structure that has reached its “bifurcation point.” The latter is regarded as “the inner differentiation of the system and its parts and the system and its environment. Once this dissipative structure has been formed, the uniformity of time (like in vibrational chemical reactions) or/and space becomes violated” (Prigozhin, 1999. p. 66).

In fact, various social classes and groups of the Russian society live and work in “inner time scales” that greatly differ. This fact also shows the state of chaos of the current Russian society which is characterized by oppositely directed time vectors. While some members of the society lean towards cultural, religious and national traditions of the past, the others connect their life with a certain historic period (for example, Peter’s the Great policy or Stolypin’s reforms), the third try to keep up with the times and master information technologies and prestigious values of the consumer society, the fourth strive to become innovative pioneers and draw near the universal civilization of the future, the fifth are gripped by fear and wait for the end of the world, etc. As a result, the society loses its “passionarity” and enthusiasm to move forward and develop itself. Its institutions “get older” (this aging means the extinction of its former features for the purposes of preserving the system).

At the same time “bifurcation can be regarded as the source of diversification and innovations” (Prigozhin, 1999. p. 67).

This tendency reveals itself in certain opposition to the aging of those members of the society who do not get used to out-of-date social institutions (the system microlevel). That is when the social system gets a chance to preserve itself and continue its development.

In this case, it becomes difficult to pinpoint the nature of synergetic processes which can influence the whole society. However, this problem can be solved when the majority of the society acquires spiritual and moral guides. Synergetic scientists stress out that axiological and moral stances become especially important in bifurcation points: “Such factors as ethics, beliefs, morals and life experience are hard to formalize but they regulate the reality in critical situations. In contrast to exact sciences, these figures

can change by leaps and bounds” (Kurdyumov and Malinetskiy, 2009. p. 19; Stepin, 2000).

3. RESULTS

When the transforming society is being formed and cultural, axiological stances are changing, universal humanitarian and moral values become devalued which arouses the problem of choosing life philosophy, moral criteria and ideals. Besides, the modern scale of positive values is determined by commercial criteria and strives to achieve success regardless of possible violation of civil rights and norms of behaviour. The main reason behind this process is life practicality and moral indifference. At the present time we have morals that are estimated by money and do not correspond with any ethical or spiritual standards.

The question is, are ethical criteria and moral stances possible today? Does the modern society have any spiritual sphere at all? If yes, then how can to define it and structure it as regulative norms and patterns of human behavior? What can be opposed to boundless nihilism, pursuit for consumer amenities, career, money and other material values?

In this regard, a norm that is more valuable than life practicality should be formed. What can replace the so-called “material values?” What criteria should be used for their evaluation if historical ideals have been worn thin?

Meanwhile the Russian social and cultural sphere is forced to adopt abstract universal values which are brought from the Western world and oriented towards immoral practicality or are passed off as cultural and religious stereotypes of the westernized culture.

In modern educational projects and cultural politics the category “spiritual discourse” becomes a key element and expresses traditional ideal norms of human behavior and activity.

During the reforms of the 1990s Russia set a course for the Westernization (Americanization) of its social, economic and political systems, the replacement of its traditional values with western standards. Traditional culture was considered to be an obstacle for further modernization. The notion “spirituality” was exterminated like medieval archaism and “heresy.” In the Russian transforming society a new wave of secularized culture strived to devour all the complex of cultural and historical traditions where spiritual and moral heritage was a major component. However, it is not clear that the processes of technological modernization can replace spiritual and moral ideals that lay the foundation of the Russian culture.

Besides, it is still unclear what role is given to religion (as the main culture bearer) in the formation of the Russian society, in its state and administrative structures and many other spheres of the Russian commune.

Discussions about the role of religion and spiritual and moral development resulted in the appearance of alternative scenarios: To level down the influence of religion (the notion “spirituality”

as a relic of traditional society) on the governmental and social life in modern Russia, or to elaborate such programs for the development of the Russian society that can revive the Russian spirituality, communalism and orthodox education.

These alternative scenarios range from ecumenical projects of the synthesis of Eastern-Orthodox and Western values in the paradigm of postmodern culture to the dissolution of the Orthodox spirituality into religious universals and the ideals of corporative ethics.

For instance, the American scientists Inglehart and Baker claim that the economic development of any state is closely connected with systematic changes of the basic values of its corresponding society: “Economic development is associated with shifts away from absolute norms and values toward values that are increasingly rational, tolerant, trusting, and participatory” (Inglehart and Baker, 2000).

The answers to these questions are ambiguous since they involve thorough knowledge of the Russian traditions and culture, as well as the introduction of special courses on the history of religion, religious studies, the Orthodox culture and the basics of moral mentoring into the educational process which can the succession of cultural traditions and different generations.

The study of the factors and mechanics of social and cultural dynamics should be conducted with due regard to the characteristics of social interactions on both micro- and macrolevels (Haritatos and Benet-Martínez, 2002).

Correspondingly, social interactions can be grouped into macrohistorical and microhistorical processes.

Macrohistorical dynamics is an extensive historic change of culture which comprises such notions as the culture genesis (origin, transformation) of different cultural classes, the mechanism of traditions as the succession of social and cultural experience, the stages and levels of historic development, the evolution of cultural and historical types and various theories of modeling the cultural dynamics in culturological concepts.

The microhistorical dynamics of culture embraces social and cultural processes which take place during the life of two or three generations. This dynamics is structurally represented by the way of living, specific and translating spheres of culture, theoretical models of individuality, the structure of factors defining social interactions and the data of cultural morphology.

The way of living is a dynamic image of an individual life cycle as it shown through the change of social roles and cultural identities in age-related periods of a person, a member of a group, a member of a community or a member of a subculture.

4. DISCUSSION

Since people can change their functions in certain situations, it helps scientists to examine the feasibility of adaptation in a

changeable social and cultural sphere that involves the change of stereotypes, beliefs, behavioral patterns, values and etc.

Social and cultural anthropology does not study unique processes of social relations; it is concerned with universal processes, i.e., the social interactions that are typical of humankind (some generic characteristics). Structural functionalism deals with their specific character, origin, components, the ways of their interaction, development and destruction. Its subject is the study of the structure and functions of social relations and basic means of their maintenance and development. The notion “social activity” serves as a research unit in the study of social relations. In this context, it is interpreted as an “interaction” of cooperating parties. If social interactions are not “the interchange of actions”, but two codependent actions of “actors”, then this complementary dependence can be defined as an “activity” or “bilateral process” which emphasizes intermediate actions as the derivatives of this action.

The study of social interactions, their aspects in the history of religion and social relations has been conducted at the confluence of sociology and cultural anthropology. The foundation of this research was laid in the scientific works of Comte (2012), Durkheim (1964), the English scientists Malinowsky (1944) and (Radcliffe-Brown, 1957; Radcliffe-Brown, 1973). The introduction of functionalism can be explained by the need to study of regularities that determine the society development. Initially, scientists described the nature of society by comparing ethnographic data or collections showing the peculiar life and household traditions of various nationalities. Later they moved from ethnography to ethnology and revealed common functions of social relations and regularities of their formation.

It is impossible to explain regularities of social relations without thorough understanding of their structure, differentiation, functions fulfilled by various components of the social structure and common mechanics of preserving the integral society that is divided into several life-supporting systems (Orlova, 2009).

In the context of positivistic methodology, this mechanics of preserving the integrity of various life-supporting systems are explained in accordance with organic process, i.e. life-sustaining activities of the functions and forms that can be identified with social functions (for example, Spenser).

A. Radcliffe-Brown and Malinowsky were the first to examine the regularities of the society development from the functional viewpoint. Its evaluative elements are institutions, social roles and norms.

Social relations were studied with regard to the functions fulfilled by the above-mentioned institutions which form a certain social structure. The studies embrace the analysis of a stand-alone society and a comparative research of several societies.

This functional method is aimed at defining common regularities for different societies and cultures. Once these common features are revealed, scientists can explain elements of any given culture.

The concept of a society and culture as a system is the most developed form of functionalism. Parsons (1951) and Merton (1957) found major components of the systematic organization of a society and its dynamic mechanics. These components include needs as universal incentives, activity and social actions as the means to functionally organize this activity directed at satisfying human needs (Habermas, 2010. p. 44).

The theories of human needs and social actions lay the basis for developing the structural model of the functional organization of a society. Structural and functional analysis starts with pinpointing forming components - A social system. A “social action” is one of these components that has objectives, tools and fulfilling conditions. They can be elementary or complementary, functionally differentiated into various social and institutional structures.

Structural and functional analysis is one of the major approaches in social sciences about culture which study the systems of social interactions. It describes the mechanics of formation, maintenance and transformation of social relations.

The research of people’s life and activity calls for the knowledge of the so-called “social and biological” bases, i.e., the factors and social functions that help to satisfy essential needs. Since a single person cannot fulfill all essential functions (provide housing, food, household and life organisation), each population divide functions in order to guarantee its survival.

Structural functionalism examines the structures and functions of such social divisions which enable people to live and work together.

The functional approach originated in the works of Comte, Durkheim, Malinowsky and other scientists.

The consolidation of individuals into a united society was interpreted in different ways. Sometimes the systems of social life support were identified with biological bases (Spencer, 1972) and, correspondingly, the division of functions within a society was examined from the biological point of view.

However, functionalism was mostly aimed at revealing the sociological laws that would preserve the unity of a society. Due to the comparison of different types of societies (in accordance with the way of life, rites and social habits), scientists managed to allocate such functional components as norms, institutions, values, social roles, structures and functions. While comparing them, the specialists found the conditions of preserving the unity of a society depending on the presence or absence of the enumerated components. Furthermore, the variability of these elements enables the scientists to conduct comparative analysis of different types of societies. The functional approach granted a cultural meaning to ecological, anthropogenic and other human influence on the social and cultural environment that is connected with the processes of adaptation.

Since structural functionalism was mainly directed at revealing the conditions necessary for preserving the unity of the societies

belonging to different types, it also tried to develop various social systems. In the terms of systemacity, unity implies that each element of a society has its own function, role and place in the overall structure. That is why systematic objects were presented after their structure (namely, components and their bonds), role, axiological and regulative relations had been unraveled.

The structuralistic concept of a social system is the stable unity of social elements which functionally guarantee the survival of a society.

When the dynamics of a social system is analyzed, scholars use the following notions: Adaptation, maintenance and integration. They express different types of interactions between people and their social and cultural environment, various means and results of changing its elements and configurations in conformity with the needs of a social system.

There are several concepts of social systems which differ in variable factors. The one-factor concept assumes that one factor (economy, climate or race) is systematically important, and it reduces all other variables to its own essence.

In its turn, the multi-factor concept implies that social and cultural systems cannot be formed by one factor, but rather a variety of them. The stratified systematic concept is the most complicated model as its heterogeneous elements are interrelated and due to their hierarchal positions influence the quality of the whole system in different ways. Some of them are more significant, while the others can be neglected (Branskiy and Pozharskiy, 2006. p. 48).

In the context of globalization and new (innovative) assessment techniques of social and cultural integration, the stratified model of social and cultural development gets universalized.

The term “innovative development type” is closely connected with the notion “modernization.” Moreover, the idea of the innovative development of the Russian society is included into the category “modernization.” Foreign authors use the term “modernity” in the meaning of “modern culture” (Branskiy and Pozharskiy, 2006. p. 7) which is justified by the tendencies of social and cultural fragmentation. In this regard, scientists study social and economic changes along with the possibilities of cultural integration. To attain this end they examine its pre-conditions for the further development of universal social and cultural projects in different spheres of human activity. The concept “world-society” revolves around the “dialogue” of different cultures which was determined by Habermas (2010. p. 7-21). In this context, the realization of the intersubjectivity principle and social and cultural projects is considered to be prospective since it is the analysis of interactivity in its synergetic nature.

A special role in this process should be given to the phenomenon of social interactions which comprises all the subjects (not the exclusive part of any society that appropriated the right to be called “pioneers”) concerned with the self-preservation and development of their social system. It is supposed that spiritual culture should

become the most developed social sphere to form and maintain innovations to the extent to which they allow the necessary level of consuming material goods. The nature of innovations is connected with people’s strive to do some creative activity as an inherently valued and essential part of their life.

These innovations can be successfully fulfilled if a bigger number of people become involved in mental and spiritual interactions. It is significant to grant a member of every social class (stratum) with “personal space” so that they can preserve and grasp spiritual values which are alternatives of lumpenization and marginalization of the social groups that pay a high price for the supposed modernization of their society.

In this case, the range of social and cultural innovative possibilities of a society grows bigger. They combine cultures of different social classes, starting with folk culture and finishing with the ideals of classic Russian and the global culture (Anufrieva et al., 2015).

The involvement of a bigger amount of people into the process of social and cultural interactions is an inherently valued and a functional dominant of the synergetic development of a society (Stepin, 2000). Like in a famous Russian tale, a small “mouse” plays an important role in pulling out a common “turnip.” “conservatives” put “innovators” into the existing social and cultural environment and turn any innovations into great alternatives to meaningless projects and irresponsible opportunism in the fulfillment of innovative changes.

It is significant, though, to distinguish real social and cultural innovations and different means of their imitating. A popular way of imitation is the substitution of a real social and cultural interaction by an activity which seems quite innovative in comparison with the narrow-minded majority. These people often cannot appreciate the benefits provided by active innovators. In the Russian society the notion freedom is misinterpreted when it is presented as a major value of liberal reforms. It is understood as freedom of economic activity and satisfaction of physiological needs which cause a strong addiction to these needs and material goods. As a result, social life becomes chaotic and anarchic in all its spheres. What is more, the synergetic potential is lost on the way to real spiritual freedom.

Being a type of evolutionism, the modernization of a society is the renewal of communes which is characterized by the following features: Economic growth based on the newest scientific data and technologies; democratic system replacing authoritarian and oligarchical regimes; the rationalization of public consciousness changing mythological ideology which is typical of traditional societies. The vector of westernization should also be taken into account. Its stands for the focus on Western culture for the purposes of the future integration into the global processes: Economic, social, political and cultural. Scientists usually examine the whole complex of these features of modernizing societies. In reality, however, these social and cultural transformations never take place simultaneously. Some spheres are more responsive to changes, while the others are less changeable and cause certain

misbalance in the society. It hinders the modernization processes. People get stuck between civilizational stages and risk to step back towards traditionalism.

A major problem of evolution and modernization, in particular, is the combination of its traditional and innovative vectors. During modernization the balance of these two factors gets tilted and the structure of economic, social, political processes goes through serious changes. Furthermore, not all cultural components can easily integrate into a new social system. Some of them remain autonomous, but manage to adapt to the modernization processes. Therefore, scientists must study the mechanics that draw cultural components into modernization and make them independent. The mechanics that encourage the adaption of these components should be examined for the same reason. History and culture theory have different concepts of dynamic analysis of interactive mechanics: Cultural diffusion, acculturation and convergence. They are based on the study of the following types of cultural transformations: Diffusion (the extension of a certain culture to new regions); acculturation (the influence of one culture on the other); assimilation (the dissolution of one culture into the other); convergence (the rapprochement of different modernization stages of cultural transformations).

The consequences of these social and cultural interactions should also be considered. For example, acculturation in its extreme form can cause the replacement of one culture by a new one; assimilation can result in the extinction of a unique cultural type; convergence cannot lead to full integration.

At the same time the partial integration of different cultural components into the restructured modernization processes can culminate in such phenomena as a “cultural frontier”. This notion establishes a special status of cultural interactions or territories characterized by different stages of the adaptation processes (assimilation, convergence, and acculturation). Nowadays this term is widely used for classifying the types of cultural interactions, for instance, in the Far East or the Russian North. The so-called “cultural frontier” also characterize a special status of the territory where various subcultures or regional enclaves within a bigger culture interact with one another. These social and cultural zones of peripheral Russia were formed as the result of the interference of the Russian culture and the cultures of North, Primorye, the Far East

In general terms, adaptation is understood as a type of interaction with environment which results in the adjustment of a cultural subject, ethnos, subculture or a cultural community through changing its inner characteristics and the elements of the surrounding world, so that they satisfy its requirements. As a type of interactions in heterogeneous environment, social and cultural adaptation can be analyzed in accordance with different factors: The adaptation to an economic situation; the adaptation to climatic conditions as the means of self-preservation; the adaptation to ethnic or religious identities; the adaptation to the axiological sphere, the adaptation to the national culture, etc. Adaptation can also be an exchange of cultural codes, i.e. the translation of notions, paradigms, and images from the language with one type

of cognitive semantics into the language with another semantic system.

5. CONCLUSION

In the course of cultural, linguistic and artistic interference a special emphasis is laid on the factors that aim at identifying, revealing and integrating disconnected features, characteristics, bearers of a certain social and cultural symbols, stereotypes and traditions. The principle of identification is regarded as the relatedness to some unity (the complex of features and characteristics of a religious, ethnic or political culture). It plays a significant role in preserving unique social and cultural community or its essential features. Some societies cannot resolve the conflict between traditional and modernizational ideals. This contradiction hinders their integration into new social and cultural relations and turns them into isolates or a resource appendage for more developed societies. Therefore, scientist should pay attention to both the mechanics of integration into the modernization processes and the ways of degradation into isolates or the supplier of resources for more prosperous communes.

The problems of ethnic identity as belonging to a certain ethnic unity become especially acute in this context. Every person is a representative of their homeland and a bearer of its traditions, language, way of life, rites which are transferred into other cultural spheres. In this regard, the boundaries of cultural identity are dynamic and flexible. Ethnic identity is variable and situational but there are ethnic features that are passed from one generation to another and are unlikely to be changed: Race, the color of skin, geographical origin, language, religion, etc.

There are different opinions on the regulation of ethnic identity which can be summarized in the following way: Primordial and culture-oriented concepts. The primordial theory of ethnos is based on the so-called initial features of an ethnic group (race, common ancestors and territory) and the beliefs that an ethnic group develops in accordance with endogenous characteristics of the ethnic nucleus of its population. The theory of cultural determinism regards ethnos as situational ethnic constructs which have been formed artificially to solve socially important problems. From this viewpoint the problems of ethnic self-determination can be artificially regulated. Thus, there are opinions that ethnos will not disappear because the notion itself will become an anachronism.

Some scientists express different ideas on the formation of ethnicity. They assume that ethnic groups should be included into an independent state, economic and political class. While certain ethnos try to achieve cultural autonomy, others strive to integrate into the major culture. Traditions play an essential role in maintaining an ethnic element since they provide the communication between generations and transfer social and cultural experience from older people to the youth. Besides, the experience of social and cultural identities can be classified in conformity with its components: Linguistic norms (during a certain period), religious or economic standards (at other times), etc. Therefore, the structure of cultural identities is mostly preserved by traditions.

To sum it up, the study and understanding of modern neo-traditional trends should be based on the analysis of universal features of evolution which form the means of reproducing the past cultures.

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