Editorial

"Modernity continues to be what structures our historical self-understanding…"

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Modernity remains an axial category within contemporary social sciences. While often contested (Lyotard & Bennington, 2010; Latour, 2002), modernity continues to be what structures our historical self-understanding. Moreover, despite the former sharp division between modern and traditional societies having now been replaced by a continuum of modern and less modernised societies, the classification of societies still refers to the central concept of modernity. The concept of modernity also structures public discussions, figuring prominently in political debates in which the quality of being "modern" *per se* justifies the rejection of values and beliefs that may accordingly be labeled "outdated" or "fundamentalist". Modernity is popularly understood as equating the "new" with the "good", but this assumed equivalence is as often deconstructed as it is postulated. Moreover, critiques of modernity have not been confined solely to conservative discourses: the downsides of modernity have equally been the focus of progressivist movements. Sometimes progressivists have been willing to make a last push or offer a final sacrifice in order to achieve ultimate human happiness; here again, modernity is referred to as a historical movement that promises emancipation across all spheres of life. However, such utopianism, whether one is looking forward or backwards, is typically accompanied by disenchantment with the present. Thus, modernity keeps everyone on the move.

Classical theories of modernity sought to identify a definitive element having the potential to transform traditional communities into new, hitherto unknown societies. Here, constitutive elements of modern society were said to include capitalist economics, scientific rationality, technological innovation and a democratic polity. These elements might not all have originated in Europe simultaneously; nevertheless, cumulatively they produced an engine of social and technical power that made Europe and its emigrant colonies globally dominant. Politically, modernity may be epitomised in the slogan *liberté, egalité, fraternité*. However, the choice of which of these principles should be prior with respect to the other two engendered three modern ideologies. If, of course, a reader would accept that brotherhood, or rather solidarity across generations can be attributed to the conservatives.

Following social-historical analysis of the origins of modernity in the age of Western expansion, the ideological conflict between alternative versions of modernity during the twentieth century was seen as bringing a continuous modernisation agenda to the forefront. When the modernisation trajectories of alternative modernities failed to converge and the Communist version of modernity eventually collapsed, modernisation theory, with its most simplified version of "transitology", came under severe criticism (Kapustin, 1998). Competition between projects of modernity it made clear that modernity was not a "monolithic" unity. Moreover, their internal complex dynamics required qualifications such as "second modernity", "reflexive modernisation" and different "waves of modernisation". With the growing globalisation and transnationalisation of social interactions, modernity becomes "liquid" or is split into a spectrum of "multiple modernities", "entangled modernities", etc. "Multiplication" of modernity – despite the dead-end that was encountered by the alternative (Soviet) modernity – brought traditionally "hard" sociological modernisation theories closer to "soft" civilisational approaches. Thus, while the concept of modernity referred previously to a set of modern institutions (market, democracy, science, etc.) or values, now it could be used to describe the concrete historical experiences acquired by individuals living with these institutions and values. The human costs that modernisation exacted were now analysed as pathologies of the modern personality; henceforth, modernity's conflicts and burdens were to be internalised. As analyses of modern identity, its genesis and dark sides (Taylor, 1998; Seligman, 2000; Bauman, 2015) demonstrate, modernity has not delivered on its promissory note of emancipation as its classical theorists had imagined. Liberty, the core value of modernity, ends up being institutionalised primarily in terms of the freedom of individualised consumption (of things, identities, values); meanwhile, collective solidarities erode and more purpose-oriented conceptualisations of liberty evaporate. We no longer strive for modernity; rather, we are obliged to cope with it.

The new section of the journal – *OPENING THE DEBATE* – begins with Peter Wagner's essay *The End of European Modernity*? Because Europe has never been monolithic, Wagner claims, none of modernity's key components – democracy, markets, individual autonomy, separation of religion and politics – was implemented in the way in which the protagonists of the model had originally conceptualised and anticipated. Thus, what is needed is a re-interpretation of European modernity. The question of European modernity, then, no longer concerns the invention and realisation of a model, but rather a rethinking of self-understandings and world-interpretations in the face of the challenges of different historical moments. This would require a public pan-European conversation on topics such as democracy, the economy, freedom and meaning in our current time.

The current issue of *Changing Societies & Personalities* contains reflections on the modernisation theories from various socio-cultural perspectives. In his paper entitled *Evolutionary Modernization Theory: Why People's Motivations are Changing*, Ronald Inglehart presents his revised evolutionary modernization theory (EMT), arguing that economic and physical insecurity are conducive to xenophobia, strong in-group solidarity, authoritarian politics and rigid adherence to group's traditional cultural norms. Conversely, secure conditions lead to greater tolerance of outgroups, openness

to new ideas and more egalitarian social norms. According to EMT, there is a strong negative correlation between the level of existential security within a given society and its adherence to traditional cultural values. Thus, the greater the economic and physical security found in the particular country, the fewer people will view traditional spiritual values, beliefs and practices as vital to their lives (and / or their communities) and the more people will adhere to the values of self-expression, which presuppose moral autonomy, tolerance, interpersonal trust and free choice. Cultural change is shaped by people's first-hand experience with existential security or insecurity: this correlation is shown in the findings of the World Value Survey held across over one hundred countries between 1981 and 2014. Based on the EMT, Inglehart provides several predictions concerning forthcoming cultural and axiological changes.

In his paper *Apologia of Modernity*, Victor Martianov recognises that modernity presents a continuing ideological problem within the social sciences; consequently, it tends to underlie other axiological, ontological and notional hierarchies. The problem of the global transformation of the national, class-industrial and predominantly Western model of modernity into late, post-national, cosmopolitan modernity is at the centre of today's discussions. In particular, in the world as a whole, the national model of modernity is becoming increasingly irrelevant for describing the actual socio-political and cultural regimes of a large part of twenty-first century humankind. Under the conditions of the historical evolution of modernity, Martianov argues, each of its main narratives – liberalism, democracy, nationalism – undergoes substantial changes: in searching for social laws applying to modern society, the globalisation of modernity confirms the continuing relevance of the formational approach of the Hegelian-Marxist philosophy of history (as compared with the positions of so-called civilisational theories, which emphasise the importance of cultural differences between societies). Attempts to synthesise the formational and civilisational approaches into new theories, e.g. those addressing "multiple modernities", on the other hand, tend to be heuristically less satisfactory and to involve additional methodological contradictions.

In her paper *Historical Responsibility, Historical Perspective*, Daria Tomiltseva focuses on the concept of historical responsibility. In exploring the ability and willingness to participate in debates about the past, the discussion here concerns attitudes towards the public acknowledgement of historical guilt. Since the second half of the twentieth century, such practices have increasingly become a "mandatory element" of speeches by politicians, corporate leaders or representatives of other large organisations that have a rich, but not always untarnished history. Tomiltseva considers the possibility of comprehending historical responsibility from a particular historical perspective, paying special attention to the sources of contradictions between a consideration of the eternal and unchanging aspects of responsibility and the temporal, circumstantial contexts in which its burdens are taken up.

The current issue of the journal includes two book reviews. In her review of *Rossiia v poiskakh ideologii. Transformatsiia tsennostnykh reguliatorov sovremennykh obshchestv* [Russia in the Search for Ideology: Transformation of Value Regulation in Modern Societies, 2016] (Viktor Martyanov, Leonid Fishman, eds.), Elena Kochukhova claims that the irrationality of political actors and their choices has in recent years

become a central preoccupation of researchers who analyse political events. In Russia, these are increasingly at variance with the calculated scenarios and ideas concerning common values that have developed in the West. Thus, the authors of the monograph rely on the notion that ideologies, which appeal to consciously held common values in order to legitimise permissible violence, are backed up with actions commensurate with these values.

Lilia Nemchenko discusses *Sovetskii mir v otkrytke* [The Soviet World in Postcards, 2017] by Olga Shaburova, who analyses handwritten postcards as something retained in family archives as memoirs of the past. The postcard is seen as an important symbol of the Soviet way of life while the ritual of writing postcards – as an integral part of the Soviet order, a special communication through which the public and private spheres are brought into a state of desired harmony. The author shows how the value of private life correlates with ideological messages of power relationships.

The discussions on modernity and post-modernity will be continued in the subsequent issues of our journal. We welcome suggestions for thematic issues, debate sections and other formats from readers and prospective authors and invite you to send us your reflections and ideas!

For more information, please visit the journal web-site: https://changing-sp.com/

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