

The Factor of Local Cultural Specificity and Process of Globalization

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ABSTRACT

Cultural polymorphism is a difficult phenomenon, which has multiform influence on the society's life. The active interest of society to local folk knowledge in life-support activities and Nature using is one of the distinctive marks of modern time. This interest has fallen on the period of active transformations of environment as a result of industrial society's pressing on Nature, and the generating of new approaches in the studying of Nature and human activity based on the »technologies« of wild life. The success of humankind in creating artificial surroundings has led to both great success in improving the quality of peoples' lives, and also to problems with renewable resources and human health and to changing for the worse ecology. In 1992 the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) set fixed standards defining global violations of the environment. The 'Agenda 21', adopted at this Conference, focused on the necessity of new solutions for problems of the relationships between Nature and Society, mentioning interdisciplinary research as a positive way to search for solutions to new problems, and citing as a goal a 'balance of Nature, Society and Humans'. Pre-industrial society had a different experience in using Nature and solving problems of life-support activity under a regime of sparing nature. Experience has shown that Folk knowledge and Folk technology can, in a number of instances, actually assist in solving high level problems caused by human impact on the environment, e.g., farming methods, and, as a result offering possibilities for a more sound and at the same time effective basis for long-term sustainable production at the local level. The traditional cultures of Eurasia were engaged in agricultural pursuits and had acquired unique experiences in maintaining soil fertility and a technology which limited the impact they were having on the environment. The value of Folk heritage in exploiting the environment, especially farming traditions in small-scale, non-industrial societies, has been based not only on the technologies that are »friendly« to Nature, but also (and first of all) on the perception that soil (earth) is the source of all life. This sort of perception was particularly widespread among peoples of pre-industrial societies. The problem of searching for a way to increase long-term productivity in food grain production is complicated. This problem is of global importance for today and the future. The active interest of Modern society in the Folk experiences of using the Nature to achieve sustainable economies is yet to come, but we have much to learn from these small-scale non-industrial societies. Food production needs to be increased. At the same time, the fertility of the soil must be maintained. Achieving a balance between these two necessities is the problem. Changing the present modern human outlook from its egocentric position to one that understands and respects the natural environment, based on ideas of »ecological ethics«, looks especially complex, and is directly connected with the problem of forming a new culture. Actually, the global ecological crisis and related ecological problems take priority and the transition to a new model of thinking promises to be accelerated. In this context, making use of Folk heritage, Folk knowledge and experience in observing Nature and using Nature to achieve harmonious interrelations in a »Nature – Society« system, and for the elaboration of a change of attitudes is quite important for modern society on a Global level to achieve ways of Sustainability. Lucius Seneca maintains that subjugation of a Nature is possible only if obeying to Nature. Modern epoch of Globalization in economy and Financial systems creating a potential of high risks for mankind on the Global level. Special attention to local factors (local experience in Nature using, local Folk experience in Life-support activity) in context of globalization problems is important today. Actually, Glocalization can assist in adaptation process of harmonizing local and global needs to a way of Sustainability. Glocalization puts globalization problems down to the human scale. The age of Globalization has made the problem of cultural dialog extra actual, otherwise the Mankind has no chance to survive. The Glocalization is the process of creation of a harmony in Nature, Society and Humans system in the context of Sustainability.

Key words: folk wisdom, life-support activity, Nature using, sustainability, Glocalization

Introduction

A lot of problems of modern society are caused by an imbalance in life, in particular the Human – Nature – Society relationship. Often these problems are caused as a result of the disharmony between the access and possibility of using high-level modern technologies and the limit of our knowledge about Nature. This disharmony affects both the growing risks (in the environment and especially in using renewable Natural resources) and the risks of an indeterminate future. Globalization facilitates the creation of a unified and integrated world, but also assists in increasing the level of indetermination. It is clear now that relationship in the Nature – Society system has priority as a factor of high risk for society's future. Enormous pressure of the modern society on nature, breaking the balance in the system Human-Nature-Society stimulates scientists' activities in ways of searching a way out of crisis.

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Folk pre-industrial societies had a different experience in relation to Nature when they solved problems, carrying out Life-support activities under a regime that required the sparing of Nature. Special focus on Folk technologies and activities for supporting life in relation to Nature on a local level provides interesting information for understanding characteristics that support the long-term survival of life.

Imbalance in »Human-Nature-Society« Relationships and Global Risk

We know a lot of examples of modern using Folk technologies on the local level in the different context. Sometimes it is revival elements of Traditional culture for tourist industry; sometimes it is form (not high effective) of economic activity. At the same time, special attention is given to the Folk technologies in Life-support activity, friendly to nature and modern. I will focus my attention on Folk technologies used for restoring the fertility of the soil.

Increasing world problems in fundamental areas such as those which support life (declining agricultural production and the exhaustion of natural resources, soils, and water shortages) are a consequence of an imbalance in »Human-Nature-Society« relationships.

Speaking in New York on April 14, 2008 United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said: »The rapidly escalating crisis of food availability around the World has reached emergency proportions... We need not only short-term emergency measures to meet urgent critical needs

and avert starvation in many regions across the World, but also a significant increase in long-term productivity in food grain production«. The prospect of successful guaranteed long-term increases in grain production is a complicated problem and depends, particularly, on soil conditions and adequate rainfall to support populations in the long-term. Soil fertility and other essential natural resources, long at risk due to the powerful pressures of an industrial society in the 20th and 21st centuries, has become a general concern at the global level, and this has led to the concept of Sustainable Development.

The history of diverse human cultures has provided a good deal of data on successful long-term local agrarian experiences in, for example, sustainable soil use in the pre-industrial period. The practical knowledge and experiences of people who have based their economy on the long-term use of limited resources has validity for understanding and dealing with the problems that face many societies today. For that reason it is, in my opinion, useful to consider what Folk Heritage has to offer in this context.

Ethnological research has shown that in the traditional societies of each nation, there is a lot of knowledge based on long-term first-hand experience of observing nature in a particular local natural niche.

Problem of Soil Fertility and Local Folk Experience in Nature Using

One of the main problems for modern farming is renewal of nutrients in impoverished soil. Practically all the arable lands and most of the grazing lands are, to some extent damaged by agricultural practices and over-grazing. It is estimated that 480 billion tons of the upper layers of the soils of agricultural lands have been lost. These soils can no longer be considered a renewable resource due to a combination of natural conditions and human activity.

Over the centuries people have used various methods to increase soil fertility: silt from river deposits, volcanic ash, organic fertilizers and another¹. All these methods are effective, but do not replace all the characteristics of the soils that have been lost. This means that it is impossible to achieve the correct balance originally provided naturally and necessary for sustainable soil renewal. Russian peasants used plants (peas, grass) for fertilizing the soil and practiced crop rotation to allow arable land to recover for later use.

Farming methods based on crop rotation was popular in the North of Russia, in wooded areas. Peasants cut down trees to clear land and then used it for growing cereals. Initial harvests (during the first 2-4 years) were heavy, but after that peasants left such fields to lie fallow for a few years so that the soil had the chance to rest and the forests to regenerate, further renewing soil fertility². These practices which alternately transform arable land into fallow land were useful for soil renewal in areas of Russia distinguished by poor soils. Actually, Russian

peasants draw wild Nature into the process of soil renewal.

Renewal of soil fertility is an important problem for today and folk experience in this area is quite useful for understanding local practices. Organic/ecological farming focused on sustainable methods of soil exploitation.

Folk Knowledge about Wild Flora and Fauna

Observation of wild flora and fauna served as important indicators for peasants in, for example, choice of areas for cultivation and other agricultural works. Russian folk phenological observations, as well as indicators establishing connections between weather conditions of certain »integrated« dates or periods, still have a positive value, though modern meteorologists have not found explanations for it yet. So, rain on Samson Day (July 10th) predicts »seven rainy weeks«. The weather in Pokrov (October 14th) predicts the character of »next winter«. The practical value of folk phenological observations has repeatedly been revealed. For example, »if bird cherry trees (Padus) begin to blossom, there will be no light frost«. »If bees close up the cells with wax making only a small hole, winter will be cold with severe frost«. Such examples demonstrate the specific character of folk experience in observing nature, particularly knowledge of wild nature, and reveal the value of cross-cultural research and its potential implications for modern natural science³.

The potentials of the natural environment were used actively by Russian peasants in the pre-industrial period for solving agricultural problems. Now this folk empirical data has a special value for projects directed toward solving modern ecological problems and searching for ways of sustainability for Mankind.

Folk heritage in soil use is an important cultural resource. Traditional attitudes toward the environment were based not only on these original technologies, but also on the idea that mankind was part of Nature and from this came a special concept of ethics which influenced their use of the environment. In sum these attitudes guaranteed the long-term preservation of soils for agrarian needs on the local level. Certainly, the problem of searching for a way to increase long-term productivity in food grain production is complicated. This problem is of global importance for today and the future. The active interest of Modern society in the Folk experiences of using the environment to achieve sustainable economies is yet to come, but we have much to learn from these small-scale non-industrial societies. Bringing together these two different views of the world is the problem that faces us. Food production needs to be increased. At the same time the fertility of the soil must be maintained. Achieving a balance between these two necessities is the

problem. That is the urgent task that faces us all if sustainable development for peoples of the earth is to be realized.

Role of Ethics

Once, Mr. Aurelio Piccei (President of the Roman club) said »If we want to change the world, we should first change the man«. Education programs and ecological education becomes the central problem of the present day. The educational paradigm based on the data about technologies friendly to nature (including Folk technologies in nature using and Life-support activity) will be useful for forming specialists of the new epoch, whose activity direct toward harmonization situation in a nature-society system.

Lucius Seneca maintains that subjugation of a Nature is possible only if obeying to Nature. In this context, role of ethics is especially great. Herbert Girardet – famous ecologist, noted by Unites Nations awards, worked in the Amazon area and met with Beptopup (shaman and medicine man of Kayapo's people) who lived long from his birth in rainforests. Ecologist has mentioned words by Beptopup: »Why must the white man always destroy everything? Why does he never plant anything? The white man doesn't like the forest, but the forest is good, the forest looks after us. Why does the white man burn the forest and destroy the trees? Where are turtles going to live, and the birds? How are my children going to live? What are they going to eat? Where will they get their medicines from? Why does the white man hat the forest so much? ...«⁴.

Glocalization

In sum, both ethics norms based on the idea that Human is part of a Nature and technologies »friendly« to Nature may be useful for solving modern ecological problems, first of all in saving potential of renewable Natural resources. Modern epoch of Globalization in economy and financial systems is creating a potential of high risks for mankind on the Global level. Special attention to local factors (local experience in Nature using, local Folk experience in Life-support activity) in context of globalization problems is important today. Actually, Glocalization can assist in adaptation process of harmonizing local and global needs to a way of Sustainability. Glocalization puts globalization problems down to the human scale.

The age of Globalization has made the problem of cultural dialog in searching the way to harmonizing Human-Nature-Society system extra actual, otherwise the Mankind has no chance to survive. The Glocalization is the process direct towards creation a harmony in Human, Nature and Society system in the context of Sustainability.

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UTJECAJ LOKALNIH KULTURALNIH SPECIFIČNOSTI NA PROCES GLOBALIZACIJE

SAŽETAK

Kulturalni polimorfizam složena je pojava, koja ima više oblika utjecaja na život društva. Aktivan interes društva za lokalnim narodnim znanjem o održavanju života i o korištenju prirode, jedan je od značajnih obilježja suvremenog doba. Interes se pojavio u periodu aktivnog preobražaja okoliša kao rezultat pritiska industrijskog društva na prirodu i u periodu stvaranja novih pristupa u istraživanju prirode i ljudske aktivnosti temeljenoj na »tehnologijama« životinjskog svijeta. Uspjeh čovječanstva u stvaranju umjetnog okruženja doveo je do velikog poboljšanja života ljudi, ali i do problema s obnovljivim resursima, ljudskim zdravljem i s ekološkim promjenama na lošije. UN-ova Konferencija o okolišu i razvoju (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) je 1992. godine postavila čvrste standarde koji definiraju globalne povrede okoliša. »Agenda 21«, sastavljena na ovoj konferenciji, usredotočena je na važnost novih rješenja problema odnosa između prirode i društva, spominjući interdisciplinarna istraživanja kao pozitivan način pronalazjenja rješenja za nove probleme i napominjući kao cilj »ravnotežu prirode, društva i ljudi«. Predindustrijsko društvo imalo je drugačije iskustvo korištenja prirode i rješavanja problema održavanja života pod režimom štednje prirode. Iskustvo je pokazalo da narodno znanje i narodna tehnologija mogu, u mnogim slučajevima, stvarno pridonijeti u rješavanju problema visoke razine, prouzročenih ljudskim utjecajem na okolinu, na primjer metodama poljoprivrede, i posljedično ponuditi mogućnosti za zdraviji i djelotvorniji temelj za dugoročnu proizvodnju na lokalnoj razini. Tradicionalne kulture Euroazije su jedinstvena iskustva u održavanju plodnosti tla i tehnologiji koja je ograničila utjecaj koje su te kulture imale na okoliš. Vrijednost narodnog nasljeđa u iskorištavanju okoliša, pogotovo poljoprivredne tradicije neindustrijskih društava malog razmjera, bilo je temeljeno ne samo na tehnologijama koje su »prijateljske« prema prirodi, nego i prvenstveno na percepciju da je tlo (zemlja) izvor svakog života. Takva percepcija posebno je bila proširena među populacijama predindustrijskih društava. Problem potrage za načinom povećanja dugoročne produktivnosti u proizvodnji hrane je složen. Taj problem je od globalne važnosti današnjice i budućnosti. Aktivni interes modernog društva za narodnim iskustvom korištenja prirode kako bi se postigla održiva ekonomija tek treba doći, ali imamo i puno za naučiti od ovih neindustrijskih društava malog razmjera. Proizvodnja hrane mora se povećati. U isto vrijeme, plodnost tla mora se održati. Postizanje ravnoteže između ove dvije potrebe je problem. Promjena pogleda modernog društva iz njegove egocentrične pozicije u pogled koji razumije i poštuje prirodno okruženje, temeljeno na ideji »ekološke etike«, čini se posebno kompleksnom i izravno je povezana s problemom formiranja nove kulture. Zapravo, globalna ekološka kriza i srodni ekološki problemi dobivaju prioritet i tranzicija na novi model razmišljanja obećavajuće se ubrzava. U tom smislu, uzimanje koristi od narodnog nasljedstva, narodnog znanja i iskustva u proučavanju prirode te korištenje prirode kako bi se postigao ujednačen međuodnos u sustavu »priroda – društvo«, zbog elaboracije promjena u stavu, vrlo su važni za moderno društvo na globalnoj razini, kako bi postigli načine održivosti. Moderna epoha globalizacije u ekonomiji i financijskim sustavima stvaraju potencijalne rizične faktore za čovječanstvo na globalnoj razini. Posebna pažnja na lokalne faktore (lokalno iskustvo u iskorištavanju prirode, lokalno narodno iskustvo u aktivnostima održavanja života), u kontekstu globalizacije, danas je vrlo važna. Zapravo, globalizacija može pridonijeti u adaptacijskom procesu harmoniziranja lokalnih i globalnih potreba kako bi pridonijele održivosti. Globalizacija spušta globalizacijske probleme na razinu čovjeka. Doba globalizacije posebno je aktualiziralo problem kulturalnog dijaloga, inače čovječanstvo nema šanse preživjeti. Globalizacija je proces stvaranja ravnoteže u prirodnom, društvenom i čovjekovom sistemu u kontekstu održivosti.