MODERNITY: THE ANALYSIS OF THEORETICAL APPROACHES

In the history of Sociology there were always the presentations about modern. First of all it was understood as a new stage of social and cultural development of the society. Secondly, theories were offered that usually implied its comprehensions in the form of a specific metaparadigm with particular theoretical and methodological tools. So, the interpretive metaparadigm (M. Weber, A. Schutz and others), reflecting the vision of alternativeness of the socium, pluralism of the subjectively constructed worlds, came forward as modernity in relation to the society with a linear development as well as to the positivist metaparadigm that assert «universal» laws. Under the influencing the accelerated social and cultural dynamics quite new socium appeared, more opened and dynamic, subjected to indefinite fluctuations. Accordingly, this socium became the new modernity. For its adequate theoretical interpretation there was created and claimed the integral metaparadigm (P. Sorokin, T. Parsons, R. Merton).

Modern in which we live now the English sociologist A. Giddens, in our view, successfully defined as ‘radicalized modernity’. From one side this definition is opposed to the earlier stages of social development that were named as modern, from the other side – it expresses the process of structural-functional radicalization of the modern society as the increased influence of fragmentations, dispersions, breaks of social reality, that claim more active reaction both individual and collective actors. For the interpretation of new social realities the so called reflexive metaparadigm was required. Apparently, sociologists ran into the very thorny problem of the accelerated development of human societies. This circumstance results in the fact that the interpretations of the radicalized modernity are also changing very quickly, that results in the attempts to create new theoretical approaches.


The main theme of his scientific researches of the last years is the analysis of the essence of the radicalized modernity. In the work The Consequences of Modernity (1990) Giddens points out the feature of the contemporary world. Thus, the radicalized modernity in particularly identifies institutional developments which create a sense of fragmentation and dispersal; sees high modernity as a set of circumstances in which dispersal is dialectically connected to profound tendencies toward global integration; analyzes a dialectic of powerlessness and empowerment in terms of both experience and action1.

Radicalized modernity globalizes social space and its changes that is incomparable with the sphere of changes in all traditional societies, because practically nowadays all of the regions of the world socially, culturally and informatively are pulled into co-operating with each other. Globalization actively influences local socium being as the sociologist considers the main reason of the revival of local cultural identity: local nationalism comes back into life in reply to

globalized tendencies. Under the conditions of the radicalized modernity internal nature of modern institutes is also being changed that is expressed in breaks of social succession, violations of structurally-functional integrity – peculiar characteristics of a linear dynamics on the whole. The socium reacts on the breaks by the development of both institutional and individual reflexivity. Giddens notices that the reflexivity should be understood not simply as ‘consciousness’, but as the essence and the characteristic feature of the locomotive stream of the social life.

Due to the reflexivity the knowledge of the people also acquires the character of a dynamic factor which is instrumental in a permanent transformation of both the social institutes and the models of behavior of individuals. By other words, there appear quite new reflexive reality of mobile and plastic type able for self-realization and self-organization. Accordingly, there appear social forms which in general did not exist before and do not even have the roots in the past appeared, e.g. electronic money on which modern world economy is based. The earlier existed forms of geopolitics are becoming out of use. After the end of the ‘cold war’ most of the countries no longer have enemies. Nowadays the states are more threaten by risks and dangers, but not so by enemies.

Further, in The Transformation of Intimacy (1992) Giddens refers to the new patterns of sexuality. He argues that the radicalized modernity is transforming intimacy. Sexuality has become freely floating. The development of different variants of life styles is common. The dominant social role of men goes down in the radicalized modernity. Sexual control was thus carried out above women from the side of men who performed basic economic functions and played the social role of bread-winners. The radicalized modernity suggests a world with the processes of democratization of the personal life and sexual emancipation. It also carries with itself the ‘end of nature’ – in the sense that the out world stops to be something external for people and grows into the creation of men. Giddens supposes that the former division of nature and the social environment loses any sense now.

All these and other innovations taken together result in the fact that the way of personal life is almost unconnected with the succession of generations. Traditional life orientations little work at overcoming of subjective crises. However it does not mean the abstracting of individuals from the context of social life. On the contrary, as Giddens underlines, to adapt oneself to the social realities individuals in a greater degree than before have to constantly examine and reform their social practices in the light of incoming information about these practices. According to the sociologist, actors are knowledgeable and competent agents who reflexively monitor their actions.

One of the major parameters of the modern society is the growth of new patterns of security, danger, trust and risks. Risks are conditioned by socio and cultural dynamics of the radicalized modernity. They arise out of the absence of sure foundations for knowledge. They are also determined by institutional reflexivity – the processes of continuous changes in functioning of concrete institutes, parties, new social movements are transforming the familiar contours of the society. To live in the epoch of the radicalized modernity means to live in the world of chances and risks.

The social and cultural dynamics of the radicalized modernity puts the problem of the democratization of a society in a new way. The sociologist speaks about the «democratization of democracy» under which he understands the continuous social process of self-actualization and self-organization of citizens their readiness to the experiments with alternative democratic procedures, especially if they help to approach the acceptance of political decisions to the everyday anxieties of citizens. As a reaction on breaks and risks the individuals seek to form new social movements and interest groups (groups of self-help). In a certain sense they continue the policy of emancipation. But if their predecessors were striven for ‘freedom from’, the modern activists are striven for ‘freedom for’ – the sphere of their interests is self maintenance of freedom as an independent choice of a certain life way or life styles. Their task is the creation of the culture of citizenship. The market in itself is not able to generate such a culture. Giddens
argues that ‘life politics’ may have more social impact than traditional political parties, may lead to a new era of ‘dialogic democracy’ via it the conflicts and differences are settled through discourse, democratic persuasions, including tolerance, rather than violence. The sociologist especially underlines that the ‘democratization of democracy’ is a global process.

In Runaway World (1999) Giddens suggests a world out of control. Industrial processes which pollute, nuclear technology, genetic engineering add to the former manufactured uncertainty of the radicalized modernity.

Not so much time has passed since Giddens offered the conception of the radicalized modernity. But social and cultural dynamics is increasing and becoming more complicated. This process has prompted alternative responses from the participants of the 16th World Congress of Sociology (South Africa, Durban, 2006).

I argue that there are at least four principle moments. Firstly, Giddens, essentially, has given the Eurocentrist interpretation of the radicalized modernity which dissatisfies many sociologists today. Nowadays, as a rule, scientists speak about the multiplicity of the modernity. They state that a concrete modernity has a local social and cultural essence determined by a number of local factors. Thus, Sh. Randeria (Instit. Social Anthropology, U Zurich, Switzerland) offers the ‘idea of entangled and uneven modernities as a way towards a less Eurocentric and more cosmopolitan understanding of modernities within and outside the West’. He traces separate internal developments or paths and patterns of modernity within each European and non-European society.

R. Greenstain (U Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa) argues that ‘alternative modernity is the driving force behind many local and regional policies pursued in South Africa, India, China and countries of Latin America. It is interesting to note that this conception is developed by a number of scientists. R. Weber (Instit. Political Science, U St. Gallen, Switzerland) states that ‘the theorem of multiple modernities has gained wide attention’. M. Yang (Instit. Sociology, Chinese Acad. Social Sciences, Beijing) notes that the sociologists of his country strongly believe in ‘gradual, adaptive and bottom-up transformation of the society as it moved toward modernity’.

At the same time, a number of alternative modernities does not exclude the role of ‘global modern’, influencing very radically on the essence of concrete local modernities. Sociologists D. Neubert and E. Macano (Dept. Sociology, U Bayreuth) assert that the ‘presence of certain goods of global modernity has been having a tremendous impact on the way in which individuals in Africa behave relate to one another and to society as a whole… the latter both wish to have them and often cannot have them or reject them and yet have to come to terms with them, for they have made their way into their society. The chances of mastering the challenge of global modernity can be stated as the ability of individuals and local communities to come to terms with products of modernity, thereby, manage processes of social change’. The modernities, in particular, can be differentiated by ‘the form of functional differentiation’. V.H. Schmidt (Dept. Sociology, National U Singapore) asserts that ‘Modern society takes the form of functional differentiation. Functional differentiation is compatible with enormous ground-level diversities, with a great deal of institutional and socio-cultural variety. This variety, in turn, has more recently given rise to another paradigm aiming to make sense of the present condition, namely that of «multiple modernities»’. In my view, the idea of a great number of globolocal modernities is very productive. In the nearest future it will result in the appearance of new conceptual approaches.

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3 XVI World Congress of Sociology. Abstracts. – P. 97.
4 XVI World Congress of Sociology. Abstracts. – P. 279.
5 XVI World Congress of Sociology. Abstracts. – P. 288.
6 XVI World Congress of Sociology. Abstracts. – P. 181.
7 XVI World Congress of Sociology. Abstracts. – P. 229.
Secondly, some sociologists consider that the variety modernities is determined by the factor of the originality of social time flowing specifically in different cultures. Under the influence of this factor there appear the historical stages, differentiated by the temporal parameters of planning and constructing the future of individuals. Essentially, people living nowadays are forced to pass from one tempoworld into another where the life is more dynamic and indefinite. Taking into consideration this criterion C. Leccardi (Dept. Sociology & Social Research, U Milano-Bicocca, Italy) writes: ‘If the “first modernity” construed the meaning of future as a time of experimentation and possibilities, the “second modernity” defines it rather as an uncertain dimension, as a potential limit rather than a resource. This new semantic framework also deeply shapes the ways and forms in which young people’s biographies come to be defined… a life plan constitutes less and less the principle capable of structuring biographies, new ways of relating with the future and time are delineated’. In our view, the sociologist rightly noticed that the ‘second modernity’, as a higher stage of the radicalized modernity diminishes the amount of long-living parameters of order and, accordingly, increases short-living parameters that objectively constructing obstacles before the young people for a detail planning of their future.

A. Malaina (CETSAH, Ecole Hautes Etudes Sciences Sociales, Paris, France) pays attention to the fact that national works of art and, in particular, cinematographic arts can have the temporal rates of development, marked by specific discourse: ‘The cinema of Pedro Almodovar, which is currently very popular, can be characterized as the reflection of a society of delayed modernity’. A similar idea is offered by E.T. Sevänen (Dept. Cultural Research, U Joensuu, Finland) who states that in modernity ‘our picture of the world varies according to the kinds of distinctions and concepts that we apply to it… it is the function of art to provide people with alternative models of the world’.

I state that the accent on the original flowing of social time substantially undermines the idea of one-way Eurocentrist modernity. The factors of the influence of the temporal measuring of the development of concrete socium as well as the alternativeness of social time reflect the peculiarity of culture and, certainly, the originality of globolocal modernity.

Thirdly, many sociologists conduct researches in the direction of discovering new basic characteristics of modernity. In my view, a very interesting conception of ‘posthuman’ is being developed by N. Gain (Brunel U, Uxbridge, Middlesex, UK). It touches upon new descriptions of modernity. He analysis the following questions: Is there a discrete human subject that lies at the centre of sociological analysis? Can humans be separated easily from the machines and technologies that structure life today? What might the term ‘agency’ mean in a world of so-called ‘intelligent’ machine? According to the sociologist, ‘it is no longer possible, for example, to treat social relations as arising simply from human relations (as did Marx and Weber)… Objects and technologies now exercise an increasing power over our lives, to the extent that we can no longer place humans as all-powerful agents at the centre of all analysis, or even presuppose what it means to be human’.

It comes out from these statements, that modernity supposes to have the social of a special quality, which is determined by ‘intellectual’ technology, that is becoming the attribute of this socium. Here is a truly methodological paradox: as it is generally known that sociologists tried to overcome so-called technological determinism, and it seemed to be correct in the early sociological theories. Nowadays, certainly, taking into consideration new developments of contemporary society they come to the ground of intellectually-technological socium, which, however, does not seem vulgar in the context of the present social and cultural dynamics.

I suppose, K.J. Macdonald (U Melbourne, Australia) is right referring ‘complex space’ and ‘complex time’ to the basic characteristics of modernity. According to him understandings

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8 XVI World Congress of Sociology. Abstracts. – P. 144.
9 XVI World Congress of Sociology. Abstracts. – P. 156.
10 XVI World Congress of Sociology. Abstracts. – P. 232.
11 XVI World Congress of Sociology. Abstracts. – P. 86.
of time and space have been central to a dominant understanding of the constitution of modernity. If modern time is linear with the past enclosed in the present, the modernity has ‘complex space’ and ‘complex time’, so actors ‘live in different, non-sequential temporalities and in different places at the same time’\(^\text{12}\). To my opinion, it is a very important conclusion that will influence the perspective directions of the development of the world sociological thought. It has become a fact (recently it would seem to be impossible in principle) that the same social actors can live in different spaces and tempo worlds. And I suppose the number of such actors will inevitably increase, putting forward, in particular, new administrative problems.

**Fourthly,** a large number of sociologists go on the way of exposure of new *institutional descriptions* of modernity. They considerably extend Giddens’s conception of the radicalized modernity. Thus, some sociologists consider that the institute of religion has substantially changed. So, K. de Groot (Tilburg U Theology & Religious Studies, Netherlands) considers that there appear ‘liquid modernity’ in which solid institutions, such as class and the family, have eroded. So he investigates fluid forms of socium and religion proposing a concept of *liquid religion.* ‘This concept,’ he writes, ‘promises to open up perspectives for both old and new social forms of religion that seem to flourish within a liquid milieu such as religious events, small communities, global religious networks and virtual communities, as well as religious meetings and collective activities out side the religious sphere, such as the cultural, economic, medical and educational sphere’\(^\text{13}\). P. Kumar (U KwaZulu Natal, Durban, South Africa) declares that ‘in modern society transmission of conventional forms of beliefs is gradually breaking down, it is important to test this transmission thesis in other contexts and see if there is global trend in this regard’\(^\text{14}\).

I.G. Sudjatmiko (Dept. Sociology, U Indonesia, West Java) has offered a very original vision of the development of religion through the prism of modernity. He points out three patterns of supernatural sociation. ‘The first one is the “Communal” (“We and God”) found mostly in simple societies where individuals are diffused or “absorbed” by the community. These simple societies are characterized by a strong “We” as shown in the absence of private prayer and the word “I” in their prayers. The second pattern is the “Associational” (“We, I and God”) exemplified by world religious that have organizations, collective as well as private prayers. The third pattern is the “Personal” (“I and God”) where individuals do not participate in organized religions and collective prayers’\(^\text{15}\).

As well as Giddens modern sociologists investigate the changes in the law and order system. It is expressed in a claim of principles of ‘dialogic democracy’ particularly scientists state the trends of emotional neutrality and universalism in the police activity. J.V. Tavares Dos Santos (Dept. Sociology, Federal U Rio Grand Do Sul, Porto Alegre, Brazil) considers that the age of modernity has shown an increasing crisis of social control and policing. One of the problems is police officer’s education. He thinks that the basic issue for the future of policing is as follows: ‘the guarantee that police officer’s education entertains no discriminations in regard to sex or ethnic minority, the training in techniques that reduce life risks, with the orientation of using fire arms only in extreme cases’\(^\text{16}\).

Another interesting moment. For the last years Sociology of body as a new particular branch of Sociology got a substantial development, especially in the context of understanding the institutions of modernity. Its representatives, in particular, N. Porro from Italy using the ideas of M. Foucault and the conception of habitus of P. Bourdieu has marked that through the history of the bodies in action it can be possible to tell the history of mankind, its itineraries from primitive communities to civilization, until modernity. The transition from solid to liquid

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\(^{12}\) XVI World Congress of Sociology. Abstracts. – P. 163.

\(^{13}\) XVI World Congress of Sociology. Abstracts. – P. 59.

\(^{14}\) XVI World Congress of Sociology. Abstracts. – P. 139.

\(^{15}\) XVI World Congress of Sociology. Abstracts. – P. 247.

\(^{16}\) XVI World Congress of Sociology. Abstracts. – P. 253.
modernity can be analyzed in regard to the use of ‘properly sports activities, as well as the rules enforced by the fashion or by publicity, food and dietetic regulations’.

In my view, the increasing social and cultural dynamics objectively facilitates the appearance of new institutional characteristics of socium that is becoming more reflexive. Thus, it must be empirically represented and interpreted in theory.

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