

Globalisation with Local Flavour? – Transformation of Spatial Values and the “New Localism” Trend in Slovenia

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Abstract: *New communication and transport technologies importantly influence the understanding of time-space relations, in the micro context of local communities. These influences, usually placed under the common denominator of globalization, seem to affect, i.e. transform spatial values and challenge the established interpretations of what is perceived to be traditional, authentic, genuine and local. The paper gives a small insight into the processes of socio-spatial transformation in Slovenia, and shows the extensiveness of the globalization process on the case of “new localism”. Although new localism, at the first glance, resembles, i.e. mimics “localism”, it profoundly differs from it, on the value basis. Localism can be best described as a relation between place, understood as a space, which is relatively small and limited, and social phenomena that occur in it. This relationship is valorised (ideologised) from the point of view of the observer or the actor, and becomes a part of his identity. New localism is, in this sense, more open than localism, but still emphasizes the necessity of certain special values, which should be present on the locality. These special values often include aspirations for the transformation of current localities that deny some of the inevitable influences of globalisation process. In fact, a great number of present localities in Slovenia try to reinforce the feeling of community and use different spatial techniques to obtain these objectives. Some of these spatial techniques are much disputable, as they are exclusively oriented towards specific cultural representations, groups of people, and may even, on the long-term scale negatively affect the socio-economic development of Slovenia. This shift from old to new localism in Slovenia is analysed through data from various research projects that were carried out at the Centre for Spatial Sociology in Ljubljana.*

Keywords: localism; new localism; globalisation; time-space compression; spatial value; suburbanisation.

Cuvinte-cheie: localism; noul localism; globalizare; compresie timp-spațiu; valori spațiale; suburbanizare.

Introduction

“The core of world history is no longer the evolution and devolution of world systems, but the tense, ongoing interaction of forces promoting global integration and

forces recreating local autonomy. This is not a struggle for or against global integration itself, but rather a struggle over the terms of that integration” (Bright and Geyer, in Benko and Strohmayer, 1997, 127).

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Each single community responds to the challenges of globalisation in different ways. Some communities are more open towards the acceptance of globalisation trends and try to make greater use from the “power of flows” i.e. circulation of information, goods, people and capital, whilst other communities are less open and try to have a higher degree of control over circulation, in order to protect their culture¹. Nevertheless, all communities have a common feature, which cannot be ignored. All communities are, in some or other ways, connected with the process of “modernization”, which enables the transition from local community to more global society. In this sense, all communities form their spatial identity in relation to the process of globalisation.

Castells (1989) adequately exposed the embeddedness or, at least, partial dependence of communities from the newly organized system dominated by global networks. His concept of opposition between “the space of flows” versus “the space of places” has its roots in the emergence of new communication and transport technologies which completely transformed our comprehension of today’s space and time. At a first glance it seems that the space of places, due to the influences of new “virtual” technologies, is gradually losing its function as a generator of social interactions. In this sense, the processes of globalisation diminish the importance of physical-territorial communities and favour the emergence of “transnational-global communities”.

In contrast to this thesis of “vanishing territorial determinism” it is also legitimate to be sceptic and more careful when predicting the future development of socio-spatial communities. New technologies and globally oriented economic and political conditions surely diminish the role of physical space, which may, on the other side, simultaneously acquire new values and qualities. In fact, the information technologies that enable us to overcome physical barriers work in two directions. First, we may assume that the

processes of globalisation surmount the socio-spatial characteristics of localities involved, and have direct influence on the organization of everyday life in the community. In this sense, we may say that the society is broadening and spatially becoming less distinctive. Second, the processes of globalisation also give possibilities for the pluralisation of spatial identities. Even in technologically most advanced societies, cultural specifics do not cease to exist, but represent an important and intensive socio-psychological linkage between the individual and its (micro) environment.

In this way, locality (and space, in general) remains an important ingredient in the construction of someone’s identity and plays a crucial role in one’s everyday life. A great number of present localities try to reinforce the feeling of community and use different spatial techniques to obtain these objectives. Some of these spatial techniques are much disputable, as they are exclusively directed towards some groups of people and can negatively affect the development of specific urban environment. The paper will try to give a small insight into the processes of socio-spatial transformation in Slovenia, and show how globalisation processes influence, i.e. reflect in the change of values that translate on the level of people’s everyday life.

Local specialities and time-space compression

When Harvey (1989) analyses the capitalistic production, he states that capitalism is organized on principles of accelerating production, maximization of profit and reproduction of the working force. Capitalism is capable to sustain these principles due to his continuous reorganization of space and time, that enables the system to survive, even in the periods of crises. Time-space reorganization is based on new technological innovations, and is always

followed by a period of accumulation and economic development. Influenced by Marx, Harvey develops a theory of a shift from modernist-“fordistic” mode of production, which is best described by terms of standardization, mass production and working stability, to a period of “post-fordistic” mode of production, marked by circulation and flexible accumulation of capital.

New “spatio-temporal reorganization” brings a completely new type of time and space experience and is marked by a shift from modernism into postmodernism. Postmodernism is characterized by “time-space compression” (Harvey, 1989), which is the consequence of telecommunication and transport improvements. As best represented by the famous picture of “The Shrinking Map of the World” (Mc Hale in Harvey, 1989, 241), which indicates that the image i.e. perception of the world is becoming smaller, and smaller due to increasingly faster and denser connections all over the planet. The image of the globe, which is consistently shrinking in accordance to newer time periods, does not suppose real diminishment of physical space but refers to how globalization processes change the people’s “sense of distance” between locations on the planet. Technological advance enables quicker transfer of information, goods, material and people, on any location in the world. The time of production is cut down and almost every product can be delivered anywhere in a very short period. The short period of product delivery helped to abolish the “culture of expecting” and gave contribution to the rise of “promotional culture”, where attainability and applicability of product doesn’t play a big role, since a big variety of products are available instantly. The main role is handed over to promotion and advertising from which the product is trying to address the consumer. Harvey notices that the abolishment of spatial barriers had two different impacts on the “localness” and “placeness” of spaces:

a) First, people are becoming more and more sensible – devoted to the preservation of local specifics. Globalisation can be perceived as a mechanism that helps to increase the sensitivity for history and preservation of cultural specialties of locality. The preservation of local specialties is usually based on the premise of question: “What can this locality offer in the global context?” In this sense, many places compete in offering cultural specialties and sight scenes. Some of these places emphasize historically completely unimportant local specialties or even invent new historic artefacts that attract visitors. “The less important the spatial barriers, the greater the sensitivity of capital to the variations of place within space and the greater the incentive for places to be differentiated in the ways attractive to capital” (Harvey, 1995, 23).

b) On the other side, time-space compression also causes faster dispersion of popular and mass consumed cultural contents. As such, we can notice the processes of standardization of cultural contents and diminishment of local specifics in space. In this case, new technologies stimulate standardisation and dispersion of various cultural patterns all over the world and help to reduce the differences between various cultures and spatial identities.

Harvey’s concept of time-space compression explains the dialectical structure of globalisation processes and communicates us that both positive and negative effects should be taken under consideration. On the basis of this dialectic, each single community reacts to the challenges of globalisation in a different way. Some communities are more open/permeable in relation to new “global” elements that are being introduced into their space, whilst others tend to be more reserved and try to minimize the influences of new elements. In this sense, many authors talk about a shift from “old localism” to “new localism” (Strassoldo and Tessarin, 1992).

From localism to “new localism”

Localism can be best described as a relation between place (understood as a space, which is relatively small and limited) and social phenomena that occur in it. This relationship is valorised (ideologised) from the stand point of the observer or actor and becomes a part of his state of conscience (Strassoldo and Tessarin, 1989). In this way locality (and space in general) becomes an important ingredient in the construction of someone’s identity, and contrary to the theories of vanishing territorial determinism, emphasizes the importance of space in everyday life.

Traditionally, localism and rootedness have been considered backward and part of conservative pole of values. Modernisation processes seemed to be directed towards cosmopolitanism, universalism, and mobility. Territorial attachment, described by Tönnies (1999) as part of *Gemeinschaft*, seemed to vanish, as it was supposed to be gradually destroyed by functional *Gesellschaft*. Strassoldo (2004, 7) explains that *Gemeinschaft* was, actually, to some extent influenced/restrained by those processes, but the trend could not be carried till the end: “It has found inner limits in some basic human needs, and has generated dialectically its own limiting contradictions and countervailing forces” (ibid.). The consequence of these processes was new localism, where elements of old localism were fused with the processes

of globalisation that brought new elements into locality. New localism can be recognized in a number of phenomena that occurred since the 1960's. Strassoldo (1990, 1) enlists four phenomena that challenge the thesis of direct transition from local community to global society:

- the growth economic regions coupling small size, wide-dispersion and local rootedness of the plants with a distinctive global orientation, both in input (high technology) and output (market): e.g. Benetton in Veneto;
- the end of big-city growth and the flourishing of small and medium-size towns in the name of “amenities”;
- the revival of “ethnic regionalism” and reputedly unitarian European nation states;
- the growth of ecological movements in defence of local environments.

Mlinar (2001, 770) examines old localism in relation to new localism on the basis of analytical dimensions of “connectedness” and internal “characteristics”. Connectedness is analysed through the prism of autonomy, while internal characteristics are defined according to exclusion or integration of specialties. From Table 1, it is possible to see that old localism is much more closed, less connected, in comparison to a more choice-oriented new localism. Similar differences are recognized in the way old and new localism exclude/integrate specialties that appear in localities.

Table 1: Old and new localism

Analytical dimension	OLD LOCALISM	NEW LOCALISM
<i>Connectedness</i>	Autonomy/ Independence	Autonomy/ Choice
<i>Characteristics</i>	Specialties/ Exclusion	Specialties/ Integration

Source: Mlinar, 2001.

New localism, in many ways, differs from old localism. According to Strassoldo (2004), there are two essential differences. The first is

that while old localism was primordial, less reflective, the new one is the outcome of a more conscious choice. If old localism

seemed to be “necessary and natural”, the second looks more “voluntary and intentional (rational)” (Strassoldo, 2004, 7). The second difference is “that the old localism tended to minimize contacts with the exterior to maintain a strong closed boundary; while the new localism is quite aware of the rest of the world, and is quite open to interactions with it” (Strassoldo 1992, 46-47). In order to make a general assumption, we may say that new localism is more open than (old) localism, but still emphasizes the necessity of certain special values, which should be present on the locality. These special values often include aspirations for the transformation of current localities.

New localism in Slovenia

Data from the public opinion poll entitled *Socio-spatial Values* (Hočevar et al., 2004) show that some elements of new localism have been integrated into the lifestyles of Slovenian population. Especially the processes of urban sprawl i.e. dispersed suburbanisation and new localism seem to be deeply connected. New localism represents a “form of living” i.e. a lifestyle, in which old localisms are transformed to be in accordance

with the necessities of everyday life in a society which is affected by the globalisation processes. Especially improvements in transport and communication technologies go hand in hand with the social transformations that can be, like in many other Central European post-socialist countries, noticed also in Slovenia. The reactions of the Slovenian population to the challenges of globalisation are two-sided.

On one hand, the analysis of spatial values (2004) showed that Slovenian population is well aware of unfavourable spatial trends that are momentarily connected with urban sprawl and protection of urban environment. The values presented in graph 1 could not be labelled as being part of old localism trends, which try to protect the lifestyle of the traditional community, at any cost. On the contrary, presented spatial values express the population’s awareness of possible negative effects of present urban development in Slovenia, and point out that the population is open to the exchange, or even integration of new information and rules into their value system. On the basis of this awareness, new, more spatially sustainable oriented, values could be produced on the long run.

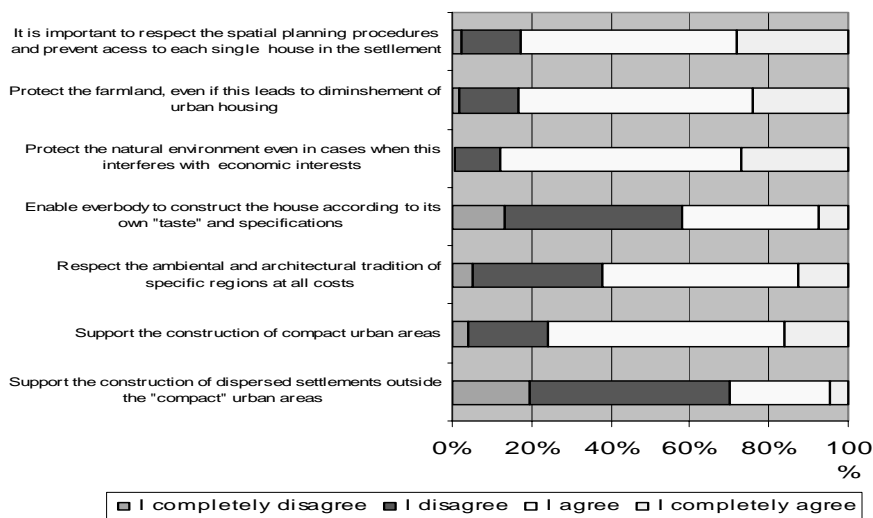
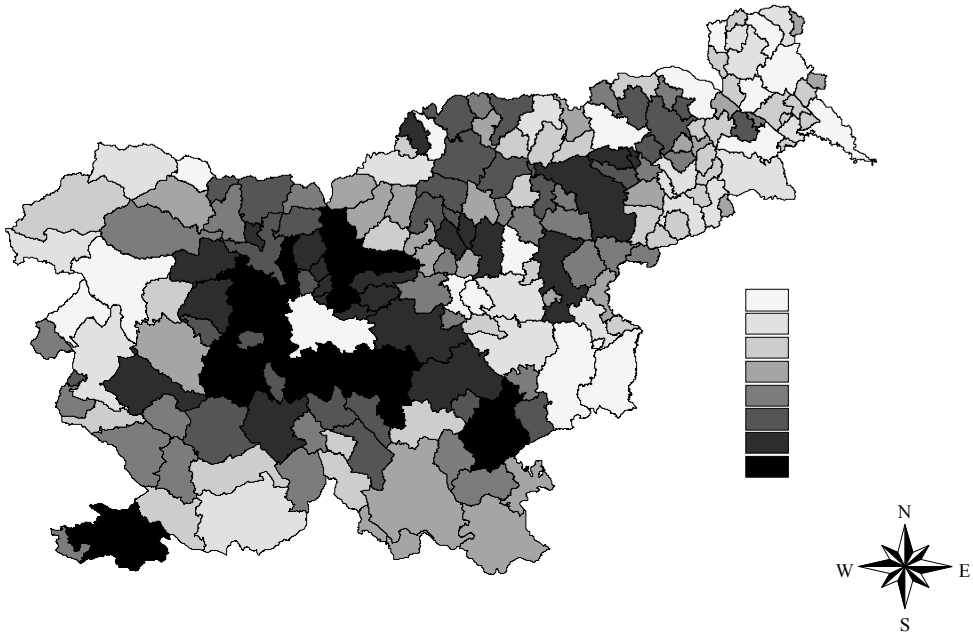


Figure 1: Which preventive spatial measures would you apply in the case of Slovenia?
Source: Hočevar et al. (2004).

On the other hand, we can notice that “in praxis”, i.e. at the level of everyday life, the majority of population have not yet changed their habits and routines. At the moment, Slovenia has a high degree of urban dispersion and adaptation of people to car transport system. Slovenia, with its 20,256 km², has more than 6,000 settlements and small-inhabited areas. The national register from 1991 shows that small settlements are prevalent in confront to densely populated areas (more than 50% of settlements have less than 100 people,

10% of settlements have more than 500 people and only 15% more than 10,000 (in this areas lives more than one third of the population). In the last 15 years, the processes of suburbanisation continued and evolved. The concentration of population in large suburban areas that gravitate to bigger urban centres has increased. Figure 2 shows changes in the number of inhabitants during the period 1991-2002. The darker is the colour of the municipality, the bigger is the number of newly acquired inhabitants.



* Abbreviation LJ is representing the city of Ljubljana (the capital and largest city in Slovenia)

** Abbreviation MB is representing the city of Maribor (the second largest city in Slovenia)

Figure 2: Slovenia – changes in the number of inhabitants (by municipality) 1991-2002
 Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, 2004.

The analyses show that more than 62% (1,230,000) of all Slovenian population lives inside the two-kilometre gravitation

belt from the urban centre (at the local level). Around 23% of population lives in 2-5 kilometre gravitation belt and 15% of

Slovenian people live in an area which is more than five kilometres distant from the local city centre. The dispersion of settlements coincides with the daily working migration flows from suburban areas to local city centres. The case of Ljubljana metropolitan region is especially evident. The next two diagrams show daily working migration flows in the Ljubljana

region (Figure 3). The thickness of the line signs the number of daily migrants (the thicker is the line, the larger is the number of daily migrants). The first diagram represents the daily working migration flows into Ljubljana, while the second shows daily working migration flows that are directed out of Ljubljana.

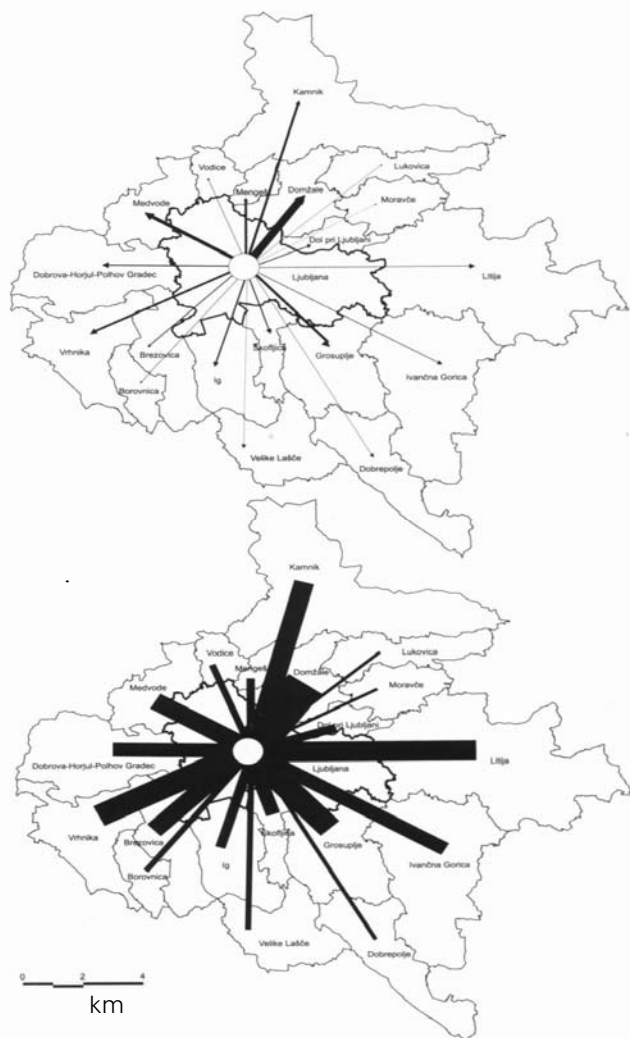


Figure 3: Daily working migrations flows in the Ljubljana region
Source: Rus and Stanič (2000)

Legend:

*The thickness of the lines on the two maps indicates the intensity of daily migration flows from (first picture) and into (second picture) the centre of Ljubljana.

Examples:

10.000 commuters



5.000 commuters



1.000 commuters



In this context, Slovenia represents a special case, which could be best described by a high degree of domiciliation (home-centered value orientation) and strong auto-dependence, i.e. an increasing number of daily migration flows of working people are willing to drive with automobile to their

working place from their localities. The auto-dependence intensified with the crisis of collective transport companies that reached the culmination point in the 1990's period, after the proclamation of Slovenian independency and transition into the market economy (Figure 4).

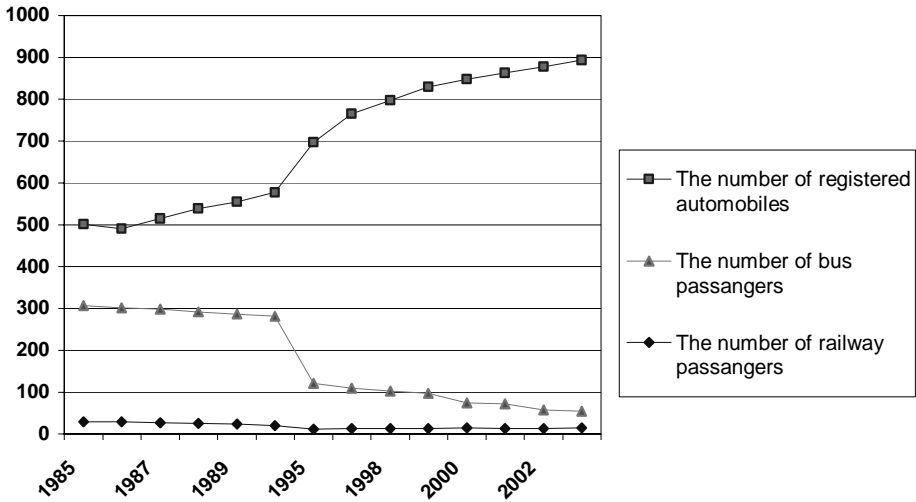


Figure 4: *The number of passengers in bus and railway public transport and the number of registered automobiles (in thousands), in the period 1985-2004. Source: Statistical Institute of the Republic of Slovenia, 1995; Statistical Institute of the Republic of Slovenia, 2000; Statistical Institute of the Republic of Slovenia, 2003.*

The crisis was a combination of various factors, which include the growing number of automobiles, decline in the number of bus and railways passengers, fast upgrading of highway network, but also important political decisions² and strong value orientation towards “materialism” (Inglehardt, 1990), that happened after the change of political and economic system in Slovenia. The materialistic value orientation may be described as a state where citizens are highly focused on goals for making a lot of money, having many possessions, and attaining high status. According to Kasser et al. (2007) and Schwartz (2007), the nations where materialism represents the

prevalent pole in the value system pursue highly competitive forms of capitalism with little governmental regulation. Thus, materialistic values are part of the ideological and institutional package that encourages politicians and other important actor to promote policies that enable fast economic growth.³ With the accelerated construction of highway network, the state planned to compensate the delay that was created in previous periods and set up the basic infrastructure for economic development. The construction of highway network indeed accelerated the economic growth in Slovenia, but also intensified the

dependence of spatial system upon one form of transport.

Automobile was considered a “neutral technology” (1999, 1), which doesn’t have much influence on the transformation of the civil society. In reality, the increasing number of automobile users brought important changes in the structure of society and gave rise to the phenomenon of “automobility”, which can be described as patterns of social behaviour that are based, i.e. embedded in the use of automobile transport in all aspects of everyday life. Automobility changes the comprehension of time-space dimensions and includes the production of new social spaces, which structure the flows of people and goods along particular paths, i.e. roads and highways. The rise of automobility produced impetus for the transformation of civil society and formation of new models of movement, dwelling and socialisation,⁴ which can in the case of Slovenia, be well combined with the trends of new localism.

The high degree of automobilisation in Slovenia represents only a part or one

element of a larger, multilayered new localism trend, which shows that people are well adapted to the individualisation of transport. Simultaneously, as the population integrated the individualisation of transport in their daily life, they would also like to live in a local, small settlement that supports a strongly connected community. In this sense, new localism in Slovenia is best described by the data that represent the living preferences of Slovenian people (Figure 5). The graph shows that the largest number of people would prefer to live outside the big cities – in the countryside (predominantly rural areas, 31.3 %), in a small settlement (22.2%), in a larger settlement or small town with up to 20,000 inhabitants (10.9%) and suburbs of a larger city (13.9%). A relatively big proportion of the people (10.1%) don’t occupy themselves too much with the location of their home, as long as there exist good transport connections to the places that are important for their everyday life (work, leisure, etc.).

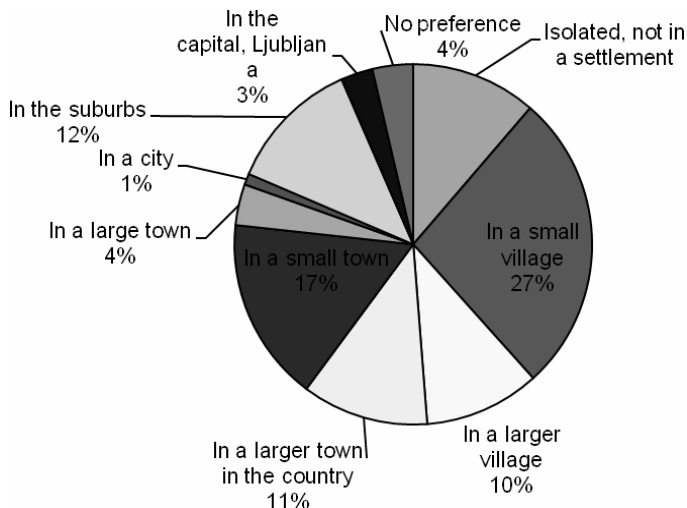


Figure 5: Residential preferences of respondents – Where would you like to live? Source: Hočevar et al. (2004).

The numbers show a high degree of local attachment, or at least express people's strong wish for intensive community interweaving (involvement in the local community). The orientation, aspiration toward increasing the number of small settlements, of residential areas in the vicinities of larger cities is not a negative aspect of community building, as long as it supports the urban structure of the territory. New localism, which expresses a form of identity resistance to globalisation processes, could be a positive trend, when carefully combined and followed by a strategic spatial development activity, that is based on the development of the region. In other case, new localism could act as a supporter of suburbanisation trends and increase the dispersion of small settlements across the whole region. In this sense, new localism would be described as a negative trend, which has extremely unfavourable effects on the spatial development and causes big damage to environment.

In a similar context, French post-structuralist Debord (1992) described the formation of new multifunctional spaces, located in the "intermediary zone", between the city and the countryside. He presupposes that in this process, where elements of the city (and remains of its urbanity) mix with the elements of the countryside, some completely new "spatio-organisational forms" are taking shape. The new phase in the evolution of cities Debord dramatically described as: "the reconstruction of semi-countryside, where natural relationships of old countryside and social relationships of historical city are lost" (Debord, 1999, 117). Semi-countryside is not yet a city not yet a village but an eclectic mix of both living systems, and represents one of the most common spatio-organisational structures in the "disappearing city". If the history of urban economy was based on the contradiction, confrontation between the city and the countryside, in the period after the 1960's a turnaround

happened. Intense spatial reorganization led to a formation of new structure where the city lost its dominant role and is now in the same melting pot with countryside. Similarly, the lifestyles of people which live on these spaces are being intermingled and integrated into new forms. New localism is an expression of those tendencies and shows the aspirations and innovative strategies of people, which try to combine the best qualities that rural and urban areas can offer.

Conclusion

Spatial reorganisations that we lately witness in Slovenia are certainly not only a product of factors that include formal changes of legal procedures and adopted laws, acts, documents, but also changes of the informal aspects i.e. socially and culturally defined characteristics that influence the everyday life. Although formal procedures at the first glance, seem to have the primary role in confronting the social and cultural processes, the relation is not so clear as the latter shape and adapt formal procedures via spatial values. According to Ronald Inglehart, who analysed the impact of cultural values on national socio-economic systems in the EU countries (World Values Survey, 1995, 1996, 1997), the economic development plays an important role in the transformation of existing/accepted social values, and is also retroactively influenced by their change. In discussing the different pace of values shift in West European countries, Inglehart (1977) emphasizes the conjunction between economic growth and social development. The improvement of economic, social security and educational, occupational opportunity may prompt a shift towards postmaterialist values that are indicated through a greater emphasis on goals such as self-expression, quality of life and belonging. While materialistic value orientation is focused on economic effecti-

veness, post-materialist value orientation represents a shift from economic effectiveness to society, justice and other values.

Inglehart (1990) admits that the shift from materialist to postmaterialist values is not a uniquely western phenomenon. It is rather found in societies with widely different institutions and cultural traditions. The value change from materialism to post-materialism is, thus, not a direct consequence of greater wealth but depends from the very different societal and environmental characteristic of societies – extensiveness of welfare provision, expansion of education, growth of employment in third and fourth employment sector, etc. For example, the data from 1995, 1997 show that many developed middle European countries (e.g. Slovenia, Czech Republic, Slovakia), probably due to influences from transition period, still have a materialistic orientation that affects the economic and political systems of these societies, but many authors (Deth and Scarbrough, 1998; Turnšek et al., 2000), at the same time, assert that after 1995 changes in the direction of postmaterialistic value orientation have been noticed. If this is correct, the current system of values in Slovenia, although it still bases on materialistic values, in the overall scheme also includes elements of post-materialistic values.

Notes

1. Culture is, in the context of this paper, described as a prevalent system of values and other elements of special value for the community (e.g.: artefacts, rituals).

2. E.g.: abandonment of specific public transport programs and their replacement with other transport programs (abolishment of tramway lines in Ljubljana (in 1958) and their substitution with bus transport).

As we saw from the presented examples, the combination of post-materialistic and prevalent materialistic value orientations results in strong new localism trends in Slovenia, which, at the moment, works as an intensifier of the processes of urban sprawl and growth of suburban areas. However, on the long run, the trend of urban sprawl could be reversed, as the values of new localism also include strong ecological orientations, i.e. high importance is dedicated to protection of environment on all scales (local, regional and national). In conclusion, we may say that, according to gradual development of post-materialistic values, the process of “glocalisation” (Robertson, 1995) is already on the way in Slovenia. The effects of global exchange of information, goods, people are here and are changing the everyday life of individuals, which are at a great extent still unaware of those processes. In a limited sense the global processes are unconsciously affecting their lives. Although it seems that glocalisation does not have a direct impact on the physical environment, we may say that on the subliminal level already “works” from the inside of people, and deeply affects the spatial development of Slovenia.

3. The opposition to materialistic value orientation is identified in “post-materialistic” values that include personal growth, close interpersonal relationships, and contributing to the wider community (Inglehart, 1990; Grouzet et al., 2005). These “intrinsic” values are also known to promote greater well-being, more pro-social behaviour, and higher levels of ecological sustainability (Kasser, 2006).

4. Urry (1999, 1): western civil societies, due to dependence upon automobile transport entitle as “societies of automobility”.

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Primit la redacție: iunie, 2011