

Information

**CREATIVE TERRITORY MANAGEMENT: A SMALL
TOWN IN THE INFORMATION SOCIETY**

Elena Shklyarik*

Information technologies (IT) changed the status of the old industrial centers. Big cities have enough energy and human resources to manage their problems and run the e-economy. But small towns often have no opportunities for growth. They face degradation and death. Economical and political crisis at the beginning of the 1990's in Russia led to stagnation of many small towns. When the main "city-formative" plant was closed, all services and social infrastructure were immediately ruined. Depopulation, ecology risk, closed libraries and colleges, transportation cuts – these are only one side of the problem. The other side is overpopulation of the big regional centers, lost traditions and low level of the quality of life. Cultural landscape has been changed radically. Besides, there is no clear regional policy till now.

Many old industrial centers in Europe and USA (Ruhr, Glasgow, Pittsburgh) faced the same problems in their history and succeeded to elaborate various strategies to solve them. All strategies were based on culture, education and tourism resources. All of them had social support and IT-ensuring. Industrial past was overestimated in terms of knowledge, entertainment, ecology, cooperation. The teams of reformers from

* Contact details: Elena Shklyarik, Department of Philosophy, Moscow State University, Leninskie Gory 1 GUM, Moscow 119899 GSP-2, Russia (shklyarik@mail.ru).

public administration (PA) and business elaborated mutual projects to share ideas and expenses. These projects (new museums, festivals, techno parks and regenerated landscapes) created new jobs and services for local people, design studios and innovative firms. They used global network resources to facilitate problems.

In fact a new type of decision making came into being – creative urbanica.¹ It means the PA and IT synergy. E-rationality and net-methods perform new social reality in the coexistence with the landscape as a non-linear system. This approach helps to manage e-economic growth and to provide social growth.

The decision making based on e-rationality means that it has communication as the main resource, that it deals with problems positively to apply new technologies for human progress. New social IT-space comes into being, generating e-personality and its permanent development. Consequently, IT progresses because of the social and cultural feedback.

The main feature of informational society in Russia is the contradiction between the level of IT and its performance. Worldwide network technologies were adopted in a high speed and now they serve as the opportunity to develop lost and depressed territories. Low speed and free access are local net-problems. And those are really harsh problems. The idea of the internet idea is global information exchange, but local users are often not in the same position as the clients in central area.

Another pressing problem in Russia is a poor alliance between IT and PA. Sometimes local administration has its own website, but uses it to declare its position and law regulations only. There is no civil feedback, no IT opportunities for e-voting, for example. Federal program “electronic Russia” is a kind of an attached file for ordinary administration. Real local PA is out of the IT field. Information is regarded as an “informing”, or

¹ Charles LANDRY, *The Creative City. A Toolkit for Urban Innovators*. London: Comedia Earthscan Publications LTD 2000.

announcing the state will. To know real human needs one should consult with unofficial sites and forums.

Retro-mentality or past-oriented knowledge is common to PA elite and to the great part of civil community. Past experience is a way to interpret new objectives, and to mistrust the new IT and PA technologies at the same time. Low social trust and poor responsibility are common to PA in Russia. Moreover, the Orthodox mentality is the part of this retro-thinking. People believe that the future should be understood with the help of the past. Future eternal life results the virtue in the past. Tradition is fatally endless. That is why the main Orthodox holiday is Easter (compared to Catholic Christmas).

New experience is not really a new one. Information is only renewed. Great Russian futurists N. Fjodorov and K. Tziolkovsky realized the unity of social and moral ideals in the unity of time and the people. N.Fjodorov declared future God-Mankind (*Bogotchelovchestvo*), of perfect world, should come into being together with all resurrected forefathers. It means the embodiment of mankind into God. Personality should not be autonomous, united knowledge represents the hierarchy model of Absolute. It has no alternatives and denies horizontal structures. Problems are not analyzed and discussed but rather they are symbolized. Interaction is transformed into auto-communication.

Another feature of the IT in Russia is the gap between the professional management in PA and in corporate business. Ambitious and self-dependent PA has no reason to get the business involved into social policy and civil service.²

These problems are especially serious for the polar territories. These areas were civilized with the help of exile colonists and season workers.

² According to M. Castells there are two forms of personal interests of the officials: corruption and investment. In Russia, the first one prevails. See Manuel CASTELLS, *Global capitalism and Russia* [online]. Available from: www.archipelag.ru [quoted 18. 6. 2008].

Therefore migrants dominate while small groups of Siberian aborigines come down. Polar community now is multicultural, multiethnic and multitarget. It has insular mentality: polar territory is singular, and the rest Russia is called “a large land” (*“Bolshaja Zemlja”*). Soviet tradition was to work hard for several years and then leave severe North for central or south territory. That is why nomadic attitude towards environment is still popular. One can notice machines and geology equipment left in taiga, no permanent roads, nobody cares about destroying wild life. The main contradiction is between personal responsibility and professional dignity, and the necessity to follow the centralized PA decisions. Local authorities do not help professional communal alliances in the field of medicine, education or arts, for example. Territory is the frame for decision making. Hence, to discover goals and resources for a small town, one should restore its segment in history and culture of a landscape. Post-industrial meaning of a landscape has diversified implications in economics, geography, social psychology and, finally, in urban studies.

Cities like Norilsk and Doudinka still keep industry and urban infrastructure, but small towns in Krasnoyarsk region are collapsing. Their inhabitants have the choice to leave or to stay. This is also the urban strategy: derelict towns and depressive environment, or new goals and comfortable secure life. Igarka is the town of this kind. It is situated on Yenisei river and had very successful international timber trade because of the double sea-river port. At the beginning of the 1990's, the timber factory was destroyed by fire, and Igarka was said to be “non-perspective” town. Social migration program was announced, direct air communication with Norilsk, Moscow and St. Petersburg was cut. For several years Igarka depopulated from two hundred thousands to seven thousands. More than three and a half thousands do not agree to leave the town. Igarka is their Motherland. They have no need to leave it.

This was found out after the research initiated by the Permafrost Museum (PFM). PFM was founded at the place of the scientific laboratory

which examined the permafrost land. Museum has several unique permafrost undergrounds (150 square meters at the depth of 10 meters), geography and new history departments. PFM won the European title of “The Best Museum 2002”. It established public art laboratories and an exposition hall. It consolidates all creative people in Igarka and organizes project competitions for children. PFM is the member of the Museum movement “Archives revive the city”, as during the repression time Igarka was the center of GULAG railway construction from Salekhard. In close proximity to Igarka there are many concentration camps, locomotives, bridges and railways that have been ruined by permafrost. The museum should keep historical memory, and PFM contributors make a lot of archive work to elaborate local town identity which corresponds to national history. They made videos on PFM exposition, on natural and cultural regional objects. One of them is the unique ice mountain 50 thousand years old. Merely the PFM web-site is the Internet information about Igarka.

Another object of research is the original work of Ivan Leonidov, an extraordinary architect. He is famous with his avant-garde paper projects which are supposed to have no real buildings. Nevertheless archives investigation found out that I. Leonidov had created the general city plan of Igarka and had constructed several buildings. One of them was identified in 2005 as the river port office. This result is of the worldwide significance.

Obviously PFM is the point of renovation for Igarka. Altruism and positive cooperation help museum team to manage tourism and information business, to improve education and arts, to take part in local decision making. Museum professionals coordinate interests of civil community, PA, multidisciplinary professionals and former Igarka’s inhabitants diaspora. They are also looking for the international contacts. They make informational products and informational relationships. In April 2006 PFM initiated the creative urban expertise. The resource map and *the informational policy paradigm* were the results of this expertise:

Objectives

- to innovate Igarka as a Yenisei Polar center for tourism and research in Geology, Archeology, Hydrology, Architecture, etc.
- to protect the unique natural and historical objects
- to create the non-linear model for decision making

Instruments

- to build infrastructure for ecotourism, extreme sports and season research
- to create permanent informational center to coordinate various contacts and directions
- to establish annual city festival “Leonidas” 16–18 of November (the date corresponds to the meteor stream going through this area and in the memory of I. Leonodov and his heritage)

Resources

- environment (Yenisei, unique harbor, Poutoran plateau, climate)
- human resources (active participation of Igarka’s inhabitants and diaspora; professional growth and educational programs; scientific exchange)
- museum complex (preservation of the natural, historical and architectural objects; digital archive; international museum exchange)
- research (season groups of scientists and scholars)
- communication (web-site of Igarka and Leonidas fest, annual international workshop)
- creative urbanica (contribution to the Northern towns Association, Rovaniemi, Finland).

Result

- new business and mode of post-industrial life, new image of Igarka as an informational synergic center

Problems

- transport – no direct flights except Krasnoyarsk
- connection – low Internet;
- indifferent regional PA.

Outlooks

- correspond to communicational reality with the help of IT and net-methods in global and local aspects
- the field for innovations
- projects' synergy

The case of Igarka indicates positive changes that IT practice makes in PA mentality. IT challenges also help to integrate active local community. Internet exchange gives birth to the new opportunities of post-industrial economy in non-linear social environment. IT urban facilities lead to the self-organized reality. IT experience is the one way to survive for small towns like Igarka. This is an everyday reality of the informational society in Russia: to eliminate industrial heritage and to explore communicative values. Small towns' creative teams meet support from the global net-community.

People are not passive any more, they influence decision-making to build friendly and self-dependent environment. IT-rationality comes into being as a non-hierarchical, dynamic, creative, synergic and responsible mentality. It is an alternative to retro-thinking and to the centralized management. These are implications of global IT to Russian society today.