

## SMALL TOWNS OF RUSSIA: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBALIZATION

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**Abstract:** Along with the growth of cities and the emergence of interconnections between them through transport, migration, trade relations, the process of globalization has been going on for many years, however, the pace of its development has become particularly intensive over the last several decades. Modern cities turned out to be in a global space where they have to compete with each other. According to some hypotheses, the growth of strong large cities is characterized by stability, while the small towns are weakening even more; they differ in poor functional indicators, for example, such as lack of developed infrastructure, low quality of life, scarce human resources. Globalization results in destabilization of the existence of small towns. The article attempts to identify and investigate the factors that influence the preservation of small Russian towns and contribute to their sustainable development in the context of globalization from the point of view of social philosophy. The analysis of functioning of the economic, social and spiritual spheres of the existence of small towns of Russia is carried out, and the peculiarities of the development of these spheres are revealed. It is concluded that the specificity of the economic, social and spiritual life of these towns determines the content and nature of the factors that influence the selection of vectors for their development – globalization or stability. It is noted that axiological, mental and ecological principles, assuming the formation of a new hierarchy of human values are the necessary factors for the transition to the principles of sustainable development.

**Keywords:** Russia; small town; urban philosophy; mentality; globalization; sustainable development; ecological consciousness

### INTRODUCTION

At the end of the 20th century, in the conditions of the continuing formation of the complex interdependence of states and the emergence of an increasing number of global problems, humanity came to the idea of the necessity to ensure a higher degree of coordination and building mechanisms for joint regulation of international processes. Theories are formed [1; 2], advocating the need for a global management organization [3]. There are still disputes about what should be the basis for its creation and functioning. The most discussed theories were, first, the formation of a single world government; second, the UN reform bringing to the UN Security Council into power; third, the network organization of global governance. To date the latter is recognized as the most promising.

The idea of globalization is very good in terms of the world economy development, this is undeniable today. The cities have always been centers of economic development. Around each metropolis many small towns are concentrated,

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but people are longing for megacities, centers of industry and business, where they see a perspective, both in financial and social aspects. Small towns lose their economic and social attractiveness, the population is reduced, production is phased down, and all spheres of human life are affected.

In the sections following the introduction, the authors show the place occupied by this work among urban studies in Russia. After that, the data and method applied in the study are described. Further, the analysis of the life peculiarities of small towns of Russia under conditions of globalization is carried out. After that, the theoretical and practical significance of the results is discussed. The last part contains conclusions and highlights the limitations of this work and the direction for further research.

### **THE DEGREE OF SCIENTIFIC ELABORATION**

In this study, the authors rely on the following interpretation of the concept of a 'small city': it is "a system of compact settlement of population, which is distinguished on the basis of the criterion of the populousness, that is, the number of permanent residents. A modern small town usually numbers up to 50 thousand inhabitants, performs organizational and managerial functions, has a certain degree of the production base development, it is characterized by separate elements of infrastructure and amenities, high-rise residential development, households with a close location of land plots. Small towns are territorially holistic and compact areas of population concentration, equipped with everything necessary for the reproduction of the town population, meeting the daily needs of every person within the town" [4].

As in the whole world in Russia, the economic component is a criterion for the typology of small towns. The authors rely on the typology proposed by S.S. Lyakhova, who singles out the regional centers with developed economic base; district centers, characterized by a weak development of the economic base, and functional centers, which include scientific, military towns, new builds [5]. The dynamics of the development of small towns ranges from rapidly developing to dying out. Throughout the entire time before the transition to market relations in Russia, the functions performed by these settlements have been organically integrated into the country's economic system, helping to solve a number of vital tasks related to the problem of constraining the growth large cities by placing branches of industrial enterprises in small towns; by providing the functioning of power facilities – the settlements at HPP; by developing the textile, forestry and mining industries and defense industries – the towns of the military-industrial complex; by socio-cultural and economic servicing of agricultural territories – the district centers.

The transition to a market economy in Russia, as well as the desire to be competitive in the context of globalization, was carried out without taking into account the established system of resettlement and its relationship with production operations. As a result, along with individual cities that benefited from the inflow of trade and financial capital and the deployment of new joint ventures, a large number of depressed cities appeared, where in the conditions of the spontaneous market an intensive process of decline in production began. In view of this, many small towns were not ready to change economic relations, here, the underdevelopment of production, the poor perception of innovations, outdated equipment were fully manifested. Small towns faced a choice of a way to develop in the conditions of globalization.

To date, the most developed theories of the relationship between urban development, the principles of urban policy and global governance can be considered as the case studies of M.M. Amen, N.J. Toly, K. Segbers and P.L. Mc Carney (6). These scientists became the authors of a collective monograph, which served as the scientific foundation for all who study this issue.

The works of such well-known scientists as B. Cohen [7], F. Léautier [8], P. Jesse [9] are of particular interest; they are devoted to the study of current trends in the development of large and small towns and the problems of their sustainable existence. These researchers pay attention to predicting the further course of urbanization processes in a globalizing world.

An invaluable contribution to science in the global sense and to our work (locally) was made by *The City as a Social Laboratory*, a famous work of R. Park, a theorist of the Chicago school and one of the founders of urban sociology, this book is built on a comparison of the natural and the social in man and in his environment [10]. N. Subbotina [11; 12] is one of the authors working in this direction and worthy of highlighting, her scientific concept became the basis for studying the mental factor in shaping the choice of sustainable development in the era of globalization.

The works of N.N. Gabdulova [13] and N.K. Nurlanova [4] formed the theoretical basis of the research in terms of studying the issue of small towns and factors that stimulate their development or decline.

Theorists P. Knox and H. Mayer [14] are engaged in the development of the theory of 'sustainable development' and the process of transition of towns to the level of so-called 'sustainable towns'. R. Register [15] deals with the embodiment of these theories in practice. Among the Russian researchers, it is worth noting A.A. Krushanov [16], A.N. Tetior [17], D.S. Haydukov and K.A. Tasalov [18], S.E. Shmelev [19], I.A. Shmeleva [20], and others.

The processes of globalization concern not only states, cities, but also citizens, their spiritual development, interaction. Here it is necessary to note the studies of A. Simpson and K. Rios [21] and M.A. Spica [22], dealing with intercultural and inter-

confessional communication of people in the context of globalization. The theory of ecological ethics, developed by V.V. Mantatov, confirms the intrinsic value of nature and simultaneously introduces the world of nature into the space of human values, allowing the citizen to consciously strive for the construction of eco-cities, as a result not of prevalence, but of interaction with the natural environment [23].

## **METHODS OF RESEARCH**

The problems of the existence of small towns at the present stage of the social development were identified and studied in the context of the theories of globalization and the concept of sustainable development, as well as its separate aspects: social and environmental responsibility.

The methodology for identifying and researching the specifics of small towns in Russia, as well as the factors of their sustainable development in the context of globalization, is based on a systematic approach that is rather often used in studies of a socio-philosophical nature. Application of this approach enables, first, to consider the specifics of the material and spiritual spheres of being of small towns from the position of socio-philosophical analysis; secondly, to examine the peculiarities of the existence of small towns and the trends in their further development in the context of globalization in an interdisciplinary perspective, that is, using the experience of several sciences, primarily philosophy, economic theory, sociology and psychology. Thirdly, which is especially important for this study, the systematic approach allowed forming a holistic idea of the features and factors of sustainable development of Russian small towns in the context of globalization through the prism of various philosophical aspects: ontological, epistemological, axiological, praxeological and anthropological. The application of certain aspects of the systematic approach for the analysis of small towns is not uncommon. For example, certain elements of the axiological aspect were applied by such researchers as M.S. Kagan [24], A.A. Kara-Murza, A.S. Panarin, and I.K. Pantin [25], and others. However, it should be noted that the consideration of sustainable development Russian small towns in the context of globalization through the combination of the above-mentioned philosophical aspects is carried out for the first time.

The ontological aspect shows the existentiality of the phenomenon 'town', that is, characterizes the town as such, defines the town as a system which comprises not only the town itself, but also the environment surrounding it and forming the necessary conditions for its existence, including factors affecting the selection of vectors for the town development.

The epistemological aspect makes it possible to assess the relationship between the concept of sustainable development and the theory of globalization with reference to the study of small towns. The epistemological aspect promotes the formulation of scientific information accumulated within the framework of these concepts

into a single system of dependencies, which will allow for correct assessment and substantiation of the need to address the problems of sustainable development of small towns of Russia in the context of globalization precisely with the support of the concept of sustainable development and the theory of globalization.

The axiological aspect is aimed at the study of values formed in the population of Russian small towns. This aspect enables to determine the signs of an axiological crisis and to reveal the influence of values, especially environmental ones, on the sustainable development of small towns in the context of globalization.

The praxeological aspect helps identify the peculiarities of human activity in the specific conditions of socio-economic development of small towns in Russia. In addition, this aspect makes it possible to assess how the activities of the population of small towns are correlated with the implementation of values that contribute to their sustainable development.

The anthropological aspect allows characterizing the mental factor of sustainable development of small towns in the context of globalization, as it covers the features of the human consciousness functioning. In the process of analyzing the mental characteristics of the population of small towns, special attention is paid to the methodological principle of correlation between the natural and the social, developed by N.D. Subbotina [26] and successfully used by Yu.V. Gavrilova [27] and M.V. Privalova [28] for the analysis of religious consciousness and mentality of individuals. Application of this methodological principle enabled to prove that the patterns of relations in social groups and in natural groups play a leading role in the formation and preservation of mental structures of the individual and mass consciousness of the inhabitants of small towns.

It is especially worth noting that to successfully achieve the research goal the above aspects of the systematic approach should be applied in unity, finding interrelations between them.

## **RESULTS**

### **The Ontological Aspect**

So what is a town? Why cannot we consider a modern person in isolation from it? R. Park understands the town as “the natural habitat of civilized man” [10]. In traditional culture in conditions of residence within their tribal settlement, customs, traditions and rituals act as regulators of behavior. They are the leaders of all life processes of everyday life; they determine the future development of the tribe. However, human opportunities have expanded with the emergence of the urban community. As R. Park points out, “the city and the urban environment is “man’s most consistent and on the whole, his most successful attempt to remake the world he lives in more after his heart’s desire. But, if the city is the world which man created, it is the world in

which he is henceforth condemned to live. Thus, indirectly, and without any clear sense of the nature of his task, in making the city man has remade himself". It is in the city that there is a special freedom, and significant social changes are taking place, a greater role is played by the division of labor. "In a city where custom is superseded by public opinion and positive law, man has been compelled to live by his wits rather than by his instinct or tradition. The result is the emerge of the individual man as a unit of thought and action" [10: 4].

In the processes of urbanization, a person is studied as an integral part, as an element of the urban community, an inhabitant of an urbanized environment, but this is not enough; it is necessary to study a city dweller as an active subject, influencing his habitat, constructing it in accordance with his needs, interests, values, and simultaneously under the influence of this environment and of his activity changing himself. Being children of nature, we ourselves have separated us from it, created an artificial habitat and, accordingly, other forms of being. The modern world becomes a truly an 'urban world', modern man is an urban man, and modern culture is an urban culture.

However, the urban environment is not homogeneous, and we can talk about metropolitan cities, large- and medium-sized cities and small towns. The small town is of greatest interest for us as, on the one hand, it is a unique formation, and on the other hand, it is less protected in the current globalization processes.

In addition to the term 'small town', the notion of a provincial town is often used, in a study by N.N. Gabdulova it does not differ from the concept of a small town and is defined as "remote from the center of the country, not subject to the intense influence of the turbulent life of big cities" [13: 42]. Thus, it is possible to talk about the interchangeability of these concepts. S.S. Lyakhova marks an important feature of the small town, it "self-identifies a person, correlating oneself with a certain community and the way of life, different from the existence of megacities, millionaire cities" [5: 24].

At all times small towns were an important element in the development of the state; each major city was developed from a defensive fortification, a trade center to a modern metropolis. And until now there are many small towns in the territories of different countries, which play an important role in the economic development of the state. They become centers of heavy industry, engineering, mining, science and military affairs.

However, small towns have many unresolved problems, which are amplified by the influence of globalization processes. They can become, on the one hand, a pillar of the state, containing any progressive production facilities or as a center for mining, but they are also at risk of becoming depressed cities, and even worse, 'ghost cities'.

Numerous studies are devoted to depressive cities of both Soviet and modern times. Russian scholars offered to use the notion of a 'depressive city' in relation to non-growing settlements. In most studies depressiveness is understood as an economic category, having a direct impact on all socio-economic, political and cultural processes occurring in a small town. The depressed state is thought of as a stage in the town development, characterized by the decline in production, the emergence of unemployment, the decrease in investment and migration attractiveness accompanied by a significant outflow of population, as compared to the previous period [29; 30].

Long preservation of the depressive development of the town can lead to its complete destruction, namely, turning into a ghost town. In different cultures and among different researchers, there is an own definition of the term 'ghost town'. Some authors do not take into account the fact that some settlements were abandoned as a result of a natural or man-made disaster, they use this term only to describe towns that were abandoned due to further economic inexpediency. For example, the author of the book *Ghost Towns of Texas* T.L. Baker describes ghost towns as those which have no reason for further existence [31]. Others, for example, S.S. Lyakhova [5] and G.I. Mansurova [30] believe that settlements with actual buildings cannot be called ghost towns. Some argue that these cities should contain actual structures. Regardless of whether this is so, the town should be completely deserted or contain a small number of people, which in turn is also a topic for disputes. However, as a rule, this term is used in a freer meaning, covering any or all of the above characteristics.

A ghost town is an abandoned town, settlement or village, usually containing a large part of the main buildings. This term can also refer to towns, settlements and districts where people still reside, but in much smaller numbers than in previous years [31].

All of the above features of small towns automatically affect the paradigm of the existence of citizens who inhabit them. When studying a town and its potential for shaping the future in the context of globalization, it is necessary to pay attention to the relationship between a man and the changing environment of his habitat (urban space). The development of the town is accompanied by a change in the urban space, both external (geographic and architectural) and internal (mental, semiotic).

Thus, the city is a model of the modern processes of forming the 'human' in man. With this approach, the general ontological problems are narrowed to the consideration of human problems within the city. The chosen path of the city development (globalization or sustainable development) becomes the foundation used to form the life of its citizens.

### **The Epistemological Aspect**

Sustainable development is the development that meets the needs of the present time, but at the same time does not jeopardize the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This interpretation of the term of ‘sustainable development’ was proposed by Doctor of Philosophy A.A. Krushanov [16]. In our opinion, it most accurately reflects the content of this phenomenon.

To date, very few fail to talk about sustainable development, though the UN World Conference on Environment and Development was held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The World Business Council on Sustainable Development was established in 1995, it has done much for the entrepreneurs to assimilate the principles of sustainable development and implement them in the activities of their companies (such as resource saving, reduction of waste and harmful emissions, and the introduction of energy-saving technologies). A year later, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) was signed. In September 2002, a new World Summit was held in Johannesburg, dedicated to the 10th anniversary of the Rio Conference and summarizing the implementation of its decisions. The 2002 meeting is also commonly referred to as “Rio+10” and “Earth Summit”. This conference again discussed the issues voiced a decade ago, paid much attention to the problems of the so-called ‘poor’ states and the formation of environmental consciousness among people, since only work in this direction will help to form an understanding of the fact that nature is the highest value for mankind, if it wants tomorrow to come.

Researchers of ecological consciousness distinguish two traditions of its analysis – epistemological and sociological ones. In the epistemological tradition, consciousness acts as a reflection of social being. In sociological tradition, consciousness is considered in connection with the social conditions that determine it. The epistemological approach allows disclosing the movement from reality to consciousness, the sociological one, on the contrary, moves from consciousness to reality” [32: 68]. The eternal philosophical question is whether being determines our consciousness or consciousness determines being. As already mentioned above, we create a city, and the city creates us. It is time to rise to the next level and create a city that would later form people with a highly developed ecological consciousness.

Researchers such as R. Inglehart [33], V.V. Mantatov and L.V. Mantatova [23] identify a set of the necessary components of ecological consciousness, such as: first, concern for the state of the environment; secondly, the ability to identify the source of the threat and the social agent that gave birth to it; thirdly, recognition of a healthy and safe habitat as a public value; fourthly, individual mobilization, that is, the comprehension of the need for personal participation in protest, creative and other collective actions; fifth, readiness to act on the basis of understanding information about risks and dangers.



In 1987, in the book R. Register, Founder and Emissary of Eco-city Builders, who is one of the world's greatest theoreticians and authors in the ecological design of the city and planning, an eco-city, or as it is now more often said 'sustainable city', was described, in which all inhabitants sought to minimize the consumption of energy, water and food, exclude inefficient heat emission, air pollution with carbon dioxide, etc. Most importantly, they did this consciously, with a full understanding of the results which they wanted to achieve and tasks which they had to address [15]. The embodiment of such a dream is already being realized in the USA, R. Register described in detail in his book and during frequent public appearances how a small town can be transferred to the category of a 'sustainable city' possible, with a metropolis, of course, everything is much more difficult. In 2009, similar ideas could be already encountered among German researchers P. Knox and H. Mayer [14]. The theory of the transition of a small town into a 'sustainable city' is gradually diverging throughout the world. To date, Moreland (Australia), Port Alegre and Curitiba (Brazil), Leicester (Great Britain), Freiburg (Germany), etc. are considered sustainable cities. Recently, this has been discussed in Russia, it is planned to build an eco-city The New Stupino in the Moscow region.

Thus, small towns have prospects in the future; by making a choice between globalization and sustainable development, they can be the first steps to preserve the ecological heritage that we will leave to our descendants. The main thing is to start today to change the attitude of a man to his life, to his city, to the whole Earth.

### **The Axiological Aspect**

In the modern world, all thinking people perfectly understand that humanity is on the road of a technocratic civilization to a global ecological catastrophe. One of the main reasons for the impending catastrophe is the value-based paradigm that dominates the modern world and guides the society to the unrestrained growth of material consumption based on the development of natural resources. How much might be said about the need to preserve the fragile health of our nature, unless the principle of consumerism prevails in the value hierarchy of people, supported by big business, we will be unable to change anything. It is necessary to lay new value bases of the future civilization. In our opinion, the main components of the new value-based paradigm should be environmental ethics and sustainable development.

Sustainable development is not a strategy of drastic restriction of economic growth and conservation of the natural environment. This is a strategy of human activity, designed to ensure and guarantee existence and development of the mankind in the long term, by building new environmentally sound interaction with the surrounding world. This strategy presupposes mandatory, but managed and oriented economic growth. A.A. Krushanov outlines the following most characteristic signs of the concept of sustainable development: firstly, there

are too many people, therefore the world becomes closely interconnected, all peoples have a common destiny; secondly, it is required to provide a more secure and prosperous future; thirdly, from now on, any economic activity must take into account not only the usually obtained effect in the form of profit, but also the full load created on the nature in this case; fourth, since the contribution to environmental degradation has been made by different countries in different degrees, a differentiated approach to the participation of different countries in the transition to sustainable development is needed; fifth, it is necessary to ensure a change in the structure of consumption, implement an active demographic policy, actively use the economic regulation of activities through special environmental taxes and fees, pledges and returns [16].

All these measures are possible only through the formation of axiological consciousness on the principles of environmental ethics. The theory of ecological ethics was developed by V.V. Mantatov, he affirms the intrinsic value of nature and simultaneously introduces the world of nature into the space of human values. Environmental ethics justifies the unity of natural and human values. Of course, some contradictions arise here, for example, whether people have the right to economic activity, if this leads to the destruction of nature? According to Mantatov, from the point of view of ecological ethics, human rights are not absolute, and they must be coordinated with the 'interest' of nature [23].

Thus, the necessary condition for the transition to the principles of sustainable development is the formation of a new hierarchy of human values, in which nature will be asserted as an inherent value and occupy one of the top lines in the axiological pyramid of an individual and the whole society.

### **The Praxeological Aspect**

The praxeological aspect logically follows from all of the above; in the context of increasing globalization, small towns are exposed to greater risks, first of all the economic component suffers, which subsequently affects the social, cultural, religious, personal characteristics of the town population. Particular attention to this aspect was given by such researchers as M. Weber [34], A.N. Tetior [17], D.S. Haydukov and K.A. Tasalov [18], S.E. Shmelev and I.A. Shmeleva [20] and others. Thus, we distinguish the economic factor as the main one in the development of a small town and it is also the determining factor in the development of all other spheres of the town, the worldview of the population and the prospects for the development of the urban environment. The economic aspect of sustainable development is associated with the transition from the current economy of resource use to the economy of systemic resource reproduction, while regions are called to become the subjects of sustainable development. Today, the actualization of Weber's ideas about the economic development of cities in the era of globalization is very

popular [35]. Max Weber defining the city from the standpoint of social interaction still assigned the leading part to the economic component. "Each city is a 'market settlement', that is, it has a local market as its economic center where, due to the existing specialization in the product manufacturing, the non-urban population satisfies its needs in handicrafts and various items of trade, and where, of course, the city dwellers exchange manufactured products and satisfy their economic needs" [34: 309-310].

The transition to a market economy of an open type, the elimination of the state from solving the economic problems of industrial enterprises led to the suspension of a number of production facilities of engineering, light, food, agricultural, processing industries, that is, industries that make up the city-forming base of small towns. There are no financial means for carrying out structural reorganization of their economy and creation of alternative enterprises. The physical infrastructure created for the development of the social sphere of small towns is being destroyed. Enterprises are unable to keep their objects of housing and communal services and social infrastructure. They transfer ownership for these facilities to the town, which, in turn, is unable to properly ensure their operation. The towns that specialize in providing services in energy, transport and communications, tourism and so on proved to be most prosperous from the perspective of economic development. They have good opportunities for implementing the model of sustainable development with the growth of the economic structure diversity. The quality of infrastructure, proximity to consumption markets and a favorable investment climate are the main incentives for their development.

Defining the city from an economic standpoint, M. Weber emphasized that "a city can be defined as a settlement whose inhabitants are engaged predominantly not in agriculture, but in crafts and trade" [34: 309-310]. The economic specificity of the provincial life, of the small town was that "many townspeople, besides the main activity, were engaged in agriculture, having their own plot of land within the town" [5: 24].

The preservation of the features of rural culture in the economy of urban settlement is associated with such a problem as unemployment, it is in small towns that the impact of crises, closures of production facilities, delays in payments is primarily detrimental. The less economic entities in the city, the fewer sources of the budget replenishment in the event of a crisis, and the less alternative possibilities for earning income in the townspeople. The presence of own land plots allows residents of small towns to be partially independent of the presence or absence of wages. But finally the problem is not solved, the lack of permanent work leads to a number of social problems, to a decrease in purchasing power, to psychological disorders.

Low incomes of the population influence the development of small business, which could become a support in the social and economic development of the city. However, small business is forced not to develop, but to survive under the prevailing conditions. An even greater problem is the so-called 'market deformity and aggressiveness of imports' of goods that are cheaper than local products.

In addition, one can note the lack of own budget in small towns and investment unattractiveness of the existing on-site facilities. Investment capitals, as a rule, are concentrated in large cities, which impedes the development of small towns. They fall into complete dependence on budgetary funds and what they earn themselves. As it was already mentioned, attraction of own funds is complicated for a number of reasons, however, budgetary funds are also a problem. It can be concluded that small towns are characterized by a 'dependency' type of reproduction. Small towns become financially dependent on transfers from a higher-ranking budget. Local authorities have virtually no responsibility for the formation and execution of the budget, and, in the final analysis, for the quality and quantity of budgetary services provided to the population.

In a considerable part of small towns an unfavorable demographic situation has developed, it is characterized by a significant deformation of the sex and age structure of the population. This is aggravated rather by the outflow of population from small towns as a whole than by the problem of the birth rate as such. The insignificant increase in the population due to migration of rural residents to the cities is unable to compensate for the losses caused by this trend. However, the fact that, despite all the complexities of the objective and subjective nature, small towns have maintained the population and continue to resist the negative processes, suggests that their very existence is an objective necessity.

Young people born in small towns, for the most part, do not see prospects for themselves in their native city, which leads to their moving to bigger cities. Thus, the age group that mainly creates families and gives birth to children leaves their hometown. As a result, to a certain extent there is double decline of population – both real and potential.

A relatively low level of urban development is typical for small towns. The state of housing and communal services and engineering equipment, as a rule, does not comply with the sanitary and hygienic norms of residence. Small towns considerably lag behind the cities of other categories in terms of the level of development of the service sector, provision of urban amenities and diversity of the range of services offered to the population.

The viability of a small city is an integral notion reflecting the ability of a given socio-territorial system to survive and ensure its reproduction in the future. It is an aggregate of supplies, resources and reserves of the system that are available in

manifested and non-manifested forms; it is the vital force of the social and territorial system that allows it to carry out vital activities, the reproduction of the population and social relations.

Thus, the economic component is a centerpiece in the development of a small town, especially in the context of globalization, and in most cases the economy is not developed and not adapted to modern conditions. However, despite all the difficulties associated with the economy, small towns still play an important role in the state, they are the center of life, the 'reference points' of their territories, the location of industrial enterprises, transport and distribution centers, scientific centers and often the only centers of culture and education. The predominant part of small towns is the historical basis of statehood, national culture and folk traditions. A significant part of small towns currently serves as outposts of the state, providing control over a vast territory and the unity of administrative ties throughout the country.

The modern Russian province is a specific phenomenon in which historically formed value orientations, types of social behavior, ethno-political attitudes and specific economic practices are fixed [36]. Each small city has its own unique way of life, its image, its silhouette, original thought and memory. The population of small towns is not so indifferent to the place where they live, as in large megacities. People are genuinely proud of their 'small homeland'.

### **The Anthropological Aspect**

The existence of individuals in the conditions of a small provincial town differs not only in the specific features of their social life, but also is characterized by the qualitative uniqueness of the content of the levels of individual and mass consciousness. This is particularly evident in the modern world in connection with the processes of creating large megacities, representing structures of a global, sometimes 'supranational' scale. Trends of the globalizing world require unification and universalism, which leads to the loss of stability, to the disappearance of small towns, or to their transformation into large metropolitan cities. In such conditions, the preservation of the historical and cultural peculiarity of small settlements and regions becomes particularly topical. In those small towns that continue to exist, there are still strong trends of exclusivity and 'closeness', static state and relative stability that are possible through the application of sustainable development practices. A special role in the preservation of small, local towns is played by the specificity of the spiritual existence of their inhabitants.

Under the influence of a whole set of factors, the mental and philosophical attitudes of the population of small towns acquire the features of conservatism and protection. On the one hand, this contributes to the preservation of social stability and the creation of a comfortable spiritual atmosphere, which makes it possible for

the residents of small towns and regions to live stable, conflict-free life. On the other hand, it causes non-admittance and rejection of innovations, leads to a decrease in the overall level of dynamics and inhibits the development of settlements of this kind. Among the factors that form the peculiarities of the spiritual sphere of being of inhabitants of small towns, it is necessary to name the historical and cultural features of the settlement development, its political-social and economic conditions. A special group of factors includes the so-called patterns of social group and natural group relations, which are manifested most intensively in small groups. In large megacities, the manifestation of the patterns of this kind of relations within social groups is certainly present, but in general their importance for the development of megacities is negligible. Therefore, in the conditions of globalization the patterns of group relations will play a significant role for the conservation of small towns with a population of less than 50,000 people. The study of these patterns acquires a particular urgency for the purposes of identifying the specific mental settings that dominate a particular socio-cultural space, and also enables to consider the principles of their formation.

Considering that religion is the most important element of the spiritual sphere of society, it is necessary to investigate the special role of the emergence and functioning of religious consciousness of the inhabitants of small provincial towns, the level and peculiarities of their religiosity, as well as interreligious relations. It noteworthy that in small towns in the process of constructing a special mentality of their inhabitants religion often plays a leading role, determining the vectors of their spiritual development. Religious communities and parishes, numbering only a few dozen parishioners, act as centers of spiritual culture, where the processes of the spiritual formation and development of the inhabitants of such towns are taking place. Moreover, the processes of interaction of many different religions here are particularly intense and cause stability and sustainability of development. Thus, the studies of M.A. Spica [22] are devoted to cross-cultural and interreligious interaction. This interaction, according to the scholar, is possible due to the existence of common cultural and linguistic foundations of various nationalities living in small towns. M.A. Spica proves the legitimacy of all existing religions and argues that the process of interaction of religions is of a natural kind. Also, the researcher notes the inevitability of mixing different religions, despite the absence of a common 'core' in them. The works of this author are useful for the study of interreligious interaction in the context of globalization, as well as in the study of the linguistic and religious foundations of the interaction of individuals in small social groups.

Religious organizations in small towns are a place of psychological and material mutual assistance to like-minded people; they contribute to the creation of a more comfortable, 'quiet' way of life for the townspeople. Moreover, it must be borne in mind that all religious organizations functioning in small towns have all these features. Thus, the well-known researcher R. Sellers notes, "Traditional faith groups have a tremendous opportunity to fill a need by providing this sense of belonging and relationship-building. But people are also drawn to cults that promise family ties or a better tomorrow" [37]. And the process of entering such religious communities into the socio-cultural space of small towns is complicated. The reason for this is the patterns of social group and natural group relationships that determine the isolationist, protective principles of the existence of small groups.

According to the definition, "a small group is limited in membership (3-50 persons), well-organized, independent unit of the social structure of society, whose members are united by a common goal, joint activity and are in direct personal contact (communication) and emotional impact for a long time" [38: 183]. The activities of religious communities consisting of 3 to 50 parishioners are implemented actually in small provincial towns. The peculiarities of the existence of such communities and their influence on the formation of the spiritual sphere of life of the townspeople are of particular interest.

Any religion assumes the existence of adepts, spontaneously or purposefully uniting into one or more groups. Of course, the formation and existence of religious groups in towns, whose population is very small, primarily depends on the activity of socio-cultural factors. For example, frightening existential problems, massive apocalyptic moods, inability to cope with stressful situations on their own, and dissatisfaction with life as a whole contribute to the fact that a person begins to attend religious meetings and enters religious communities. The strong unity of the members of the religious group leads to the emergence of a sense of brotherly support, being chosen by God, the hope for salvation and deliverance from suffering. The more the feeling of dissatisfaction and discontent with life on the Earth is manifested, the greater the desire for a 'new' life in heaven. Therefore, socio-cultural factors are of great importance for the formation of different forms of religious communities. Thus, the famous researcher of Eastern religions L.S. Vasiliev notes the great role of socio-cultural conditions in the process of genesis and the transformation of certain religions and their organizational forms. He writes, "The changing conditions of existence have a corrective influence on the forms and methods of religious activity, on the essence of beliefs and cults, the nature of religious organizations" [39: 14]. The slow pace of economic, political and social development of small towns demonstrates a low level of development of the social life of their inhabitants, and, consequently, of mass consciousness. In such conditions, one can observe 'conservation' of established religious relations and their organizational forms.

However, not a small role in the emergence and preservation of religious communities is played by relations between the adherents of a particular religion, developing on the basis of functioning of natural-group patterns.

The term 'natural-group relations' was introduced into scientific use by N.D. Subbotina. The author of the term understands natural-group relations to mean "... a number of patterns of relationships between people having natural foundations. Along with social ones these patterns are , causes of joint activities to achieve common goals, intergroup competitions, mutual support, exploits, and xenophobia, nationalism, intergroup conflicts, wars and similar negative social phenomena" [12: 203]. Among the patterns of natural-group relations, first of all, one should name: imitation and the processes of "groupthink". According to I.L. Janis [40], "groupthink" includes eight symptoms: the illusions of invulnerability, collective rationalization, belief in inherent morality, stereotyped views of out-groups, direct pressure on dissenters, self-censorship, illusion of unanimity, self-appointed 'mindguards'. The effect of such patterns in many respects explains certain mental programs of behavior of the towns people.

American scientists A. Simpson and K. Rios [21] paid considerable attention to identifying the characteristics of intragroup and intergroup behavior of individuals. It should be noted that their studies cover groups of both believing individuals and atheists. The researchers point out the processes of group think and stereotyping among the peculiarities of intra-group behavior of these categories. A. Simpson and K. Rios come to the conclusion that the interaction of believers and atheists is possible on the basis of stereotypes of a non-religious nature, and also on the basis of moral values and beliefs. However, despite the tendencies of convergence of believers and atheists and their desire for cooperation, conflict situations are observed between them, which are clearly manifested in the conditions of small provincial towns.

Stability of religious communities in small towns is the result of the strong consolidation that their parishioners show. This is facilitated by the presence of behavioral reactions that are uniform for all community representatives, lifestyle, ideas, visions and beliefs. There is every reason to believe that the denser the links between believers in a particular community, the higher their unity before all the foreign, and therefore the alien and hostile, the tighter is the so-called 'substantiality', that is, the level of stability of religious organizations. In other words, the study of the role of patterns in the natural group relations in religious communities will make it possible to understand the reasons for the 'conservation' of special mental attitudes that are characteristic of a particular socio-cultural space in the spiritual sphere of society. This will allow for partial determination why the spiritual atmosphere in some small towns is 'homey', 'warm', inspiring, and depressing in others.



First, the religious communities of small towns are carriers of traditional culture, characteristic of a certain region. Secondly, they act as centers of preservation and transfer of cultural, including, mental heritage to future generations. All these factors characterize the practice of sustainable development of this kind of settlements. This is possible due to the solid unity and consolidation of individuals united in religious organizations. Entering the religious community from boredom (because there are no modern means of organizing leisure in small towns), or under the influence of more weighty factors, individuals rally, achieve consistency in thoughts and actions.

The unity of believers in a certain religious organization is manifested in the generality of everything, namely: in the presence of common goals, achieved under the condition of joint actions; of common, permanent meeting place; of common money collected as donations for the needs of the community and even of common God who belongs to the community, and the community, in turn, belongs to Him. As a rule, such communities are characterized by isolationist nature, complex hierarchical structure and unification processes that accompany the entire life cycle of the group. All this inevitably sets the 'newly-converted' believers or non-believers who joined the community for whatever reasons in the strict framework of the community. Also outside the community, the believers will continue to feel spiritual unity with their religious leader, brothers and sisters and strive to transfer religious, 'intra-community' mental and behavioral patterns to everyday life beyond the community. In these conditions, the formation or transformation of their spiritual reality proceeds at a faster rate.

When a group of believers perceive themselves merging into a single organism, this perception leads to depersonification and the desire to isolate from the outside world and its representatives. This explains the difficulty for new religious movements and cults that historically are not characteristic of a certain territory to enter the sociocultural space of small towns. And yet the process of their penetration is possible and manifests itself with sufficiently high activity. However, getting into the conditions of existence of small towns, representatives of non-traditional religious teachings and cults are forced to obey the generally accepted mental and behavioral attitudes, and the new religious communities created by them can attract an insignificant number of persons to their ranks from the total, and already small, townspeople. Newly emerging religious communities soon begin to acquire features of religious associations traditional for this city. Individuals who joined a new religious group are accepted as 'their own'. Converts begin to identify themselves with the community, obeying the conditions of existence of its members. At the unconscious level, they adopt the group's emotional background, gestures, facial expressions, behavioral responses of adepts, and in the future – their ideology and their way of life. Assignment to the members of a new 'family' and subordination to the rules of conduct adopted in the community often occurs unconsciously, through imitation. Imitation of behavioral stereotypes of the community leaders and other

members, their gestures, facial expressions, intonations of voices during prayers and hymns testifies to the desire of a person to belong to this group, to look like its other members, to get lost among them. In this manner, through imitation, the individual merits of the personality, which have entered the integrity of the mass of believers, are blurred. Converts' consciousness gradually begins to acquire new features, identical to those of other adepts, which leads to the emergence of a strong unity in the group. Thus, it is quite rightful to agree with E. Hoffer, who notes that "the fully assimilated individual does not see himself and others as human beings. He has no purpose, worth and destiny apart from his collective body; and as long as that body lives he cannot really die" [41: 28].

In addition, the imitation processes cover not only the level of religious communities, but also the level of families of their members. Children in the process of growing up unconsciously imitate the ritual actions performed by their believing parents. This process continues for several generations, which explains the features of conservatism in the mentality of townspeople.

Imitation is a natural prerequisite for the consolidation of the religious group members. However, there is a danger that adherents of a certain religious community will emulate either representatives of their former environment or participants of other organizations and groups. To avoid this, the group leaders are trying to protect their congregations from outside influence. The real world is divided into the world of insiders and outsiders, of 'us' and 'them'. It is no exaggeration to say that such a perception of the world can evoke a feeling of dislike, and often hatred to the outsiders, which can lead to the birth of religious fanaticism.

Being exposed to emotional contamination coming from other members of the community, the individual begins to experience and feel what the whole group feels. This is, first of all, a feeling of rejection of the adherent of different faiths, and, consequently, of 'them', this is a feeling of love for the brothers, and hence – for 'us'. This explains why the townspeople unconsciously feel a dislike for newcomers who are trying to enter the socio-cultural space of the city and take their niche there.

A special spiritual atmosphere of a small town, characterized by a positive or negative attitude, largely depends on the general emotional state of the townspeople. Emotional mood of a certain type is obtained by the individuals from the quality of leisure, from visits to public holidays, events held by public organizations, including religious associations. If the religious community is characterized by a negative emotional background, then, accordingly, negative feelings will dominate religious feelings of the believers. However, the balance of feelings and emotions of an individual always depends on the emotional mood of the group as a whole. The correspondence of the religious feelings of an individual believer to the feelings of other members of the community also leads to the synchronization of their ideas about the real world.

A large place in small religious groups is occupied by the processes of 'groupthink' that lead to unification and conservatism, allow the leader or a group of people occupying the upper levels of the hierarchy to control the behavior of individuals and manage them.

Thus, the formation of the spiritual sphere of townspeople's being largely depends on the functioning of the patterns of natural group and social group relations. On the one hand, the features of isolationism, protection and conservatism that counteract the trends of globalization are emerging and firmly anchored in the mentality of the population of this kind of towns. On the other hand, ideas about stability, security and settled life are formed. Moreover, mental attitudes are projected onto everyday reality and construct a special way of life for the population of towns, whose number does not exceed 50,000 people.

## DISCUSSION

Thus, the systematic approach allowed us to form a fairly holistic view of the features and factors of sustainable development of Russian small towns in the context of globalization through the prism of various philosophical aspects: ontological, epistemological, axiological, praxeological and anthropological.

The study of the small town is built on the theories of well-known scholars and is consistent with their results, namely C. Barney [42], P. Jesse [9], F. Léautier [8], R. Park [10].

The main idea of the article is based on the generalization of the best practices of domestic and foreign authors and a systematic analysis of the problems of small towns and the choice they face.

The results of the author's analysis of the factors determining the development of a small town are compared with the data obtained earlier, namely by R. Park [10], F. Léautier [8], V.V. Mantatov and L.V. Mantatova [43], N.N. Gabdulova [13], N.K. Nurlanova [4], A. Simpson [21], K. Rios [21], M.A. Spica [22].

A qualitative coincidence of the author's results basing on the systematic analysis and the ratio of the natural and the social with the results presented in independent sources on a close subject is established, for example, in N.D. Subbotina [44].

As a result of the conducted research, the idea of the town as a model of modern processes of forming the 'human' in man has been developed. With this approach, the general ontological problems are narrowed to the consideration of human problems within the town. The chosen path of the town development (globalization or sustainable development) becomes the foundation for the formation of the life of townspeople.

The theoretical significance is represented by the following: it is proved that small towns have prospects in the future; making a choice between globalization and sustainable development, they can be the first steps for preserving the ecological heritage that we will leave to our descendants. The main thing is to start changing the attitude of people to their life, to their city, to the whole Earth today.

As applied to the research problems, the systematic analysis was used effectively, which revealed the main factors contributing to the transition of small towns to sustainable development.

Following the results of the conducted social and philosophical analysis, the article outlines the provisions showing that the necessary condition for the transition to the principles of sustainable development is to form a new hierarchy of human values in which nature will be asserted as an inherent value and occupy one of the top lines in the axiological pyramid of both an individual and the whole society.

The essential manifestations of the theory of the natural and the social are revealed through the study of the spiritual sphere of the population of small towns, it is noted that the formation of the spiritual sphere of being of the townspeople largely depends on the functioning of the patterns of the natural group and social group relations. On the one hand, the features of isolationism, protection and conservatism are emerging in the mentality of the population of this kind of cities and firmly anchored against the trends of globalization. On the other hand, ideas about stability, security and settled life are formed.

The modern Russian province has been studied as a specific phenomenon in which historically formed value orientations, types of social behavior, ethno-political attitudes and specific economic practices are fixed.

The practical significance of the results obtained is that the prospects are determined for the practical use and introduction of research results in educational practice on social philosophy, sociocultural research, urban studies, urban anthropology; proposals are presented for the further improvement of studies on the problem of the development of small towns in Russia within the framework of social philosophy.

## CONCLUSION

<i>Developed section</i>	<i>Revealed problems</i>	<i>Problem solving results</i>
Ontological aspect	To determine the existential status of small towns	The specificity of all spheres of being of a small city and the peculiarities of their interaction with external factors determine the existential status of a small town and the vectors of development.

<i>Developed section</i>	<i>Revealed problems</i>	<i>Problem solving results</i>
Epistemological aspect	To establish relationship between the concept of sustainable development and the theory of globalization in the study of small towns	The interdependencies of the concept of sustainable development and the theory of globalization are established, enabling to identify factors determining the transition of small towns to sustainable development in the context of globalization on the basis of the systematic approach and in the framework of social and philosophical analysis.
Axiological aspect	To identify changes in the values of townspeople	There is a manifestation of an axiological crisis, trends in the development of ecological consciousness, which is becoming an important stage in the transition to sustainable development. Small towns are becoming centers of the ecological heritage conservation.
Praxeological aspect	To determine the role of the economy of small towns in ensuring sustainable development	In modern conditions, small towns are not adapted to the processes of globalization, which negatively affects their economic development and the quality of life of the townspeople. Despite this, some small towns are becoming reference points of the state, concentrating a great cultural heritage, scientific and industrial potential in them.
Anthropological aspect	To determine features and factors of the formation of the spiritual sphere of the townspeople's life in small towns	The mental peculiarities of the townspeople are formed under the influence of the patterns of the natural-group relations. The spiritual sphere is characterized by features of conservatism and isolationism which act as factors of stability, security and preservation of traditions, contributing to the sustainable existence of the towns in the context of globalization.

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