

SOCIO-CULTURAL CONDITIONS OF SOCIETAL TRANSFORMATION: THE CASE OF SLOVAKIA

Karol KASALA

1 Introduction

There were changing positions of single constituent parts in the story of human civilization. Culture, above all as a precondition for human action, was the most important element of society in its archaic age of traditional society. Rationalism and especially technical progress led later to the rise of an idea of "economism" with its chief goals: progress and modernity, economic and industrial growth (not development) with great efforts at acceleration of production and the ideologies of consumerism, variety and rising choices, and increasing standard of living. Western rationalism and economism - based on the Judeo-Christian thought tradition, ideas of rationalism and Enlightenment, technical progress and successes of Industrial Revolution - led to extensive crises. Ecological and environmental issues, unrenovable resources, congestion, famine, food and social and regional inequalities problems, accelerating rhythms of economic crises and their social impacts, institutional and power-relations crises, problems of social and health care and urban issues, losses of certainties and frustrations from rising expectations..., all these issues indicate world-wide view changes. And so we are witnessing the rising importance of the social and cultural sphere of human civilization, because the changes are primarily social in their character (position of the individual in the society, changing power relations, hierarchies and gender relations, social role of the state, social inequalities more problematic than economic inequalities, and so on).

This article deals with culture and culturally conditioned social processes and phenomena, and therefore it does not include problems such as minorities, mobility and migration, political, ownership and economic reconstruction institutions, democratization process, social impacts of economic transformation, organization of the society, powershifts, and many others. Culture is understood here as a set of individual and group values, attitudes and morals realized through spirituality and

Bemerkung der Herausgeber:

Kasalas Studie über die sozial-kulturellen Bedingungen der Transformation der Gesellschaft auf dem Beispiel der Slowakei befaßt sich mit der Mentalität und Kultur der traditionellen slowakischen Gesellschaft, mit der „ersten“ Modernisierung der slowakischen Gesellschaft, den sozio-kulturellen Veränderungen im Rahmen der postindustriellen Gesellschaft und mit den Perspektiven der „zweiten“ Modernisierung der slowakischen Gese.

transcendence, arts, ethics, rationality and emotionality, aspirations, time and place relations and identity. In this sense an image of the forming future society and the position of Slovakia within it will be presented.

2 Culture and mentality of the traditional Slovak society

The present national or regional culture - and also the present social features of the society - are a result of past developmental tendencies, which are very important in the case of the dual Slovak society with strong "traditional culture features" in rural areas.

Origins and development of the "national mentality" of present-day Slovakia was influenced mainly by the interrelationship man-nature, economically conditioned social relations and characteristics, by factors of geographical diversity, the long-term rural character of people a.s.o. These conditions determined the dual urban-rural character of society and difficulties of contemporary social modernization, political transformation, spiritual reconstruction and economic restructuring.

The most characteristic features of the traditional Slovak "national character" are closely related to nature and land. In its original sense national character was identical with the "peasant type" and "peasant features". They were the most important parts of national character until the 20th century, and they are still the most prevalent marks of mentality in rural areas. The bonds to land influenced the inner and spiritual world of the people. Balance with nature, sense of natural order and laws and respect for the laws were results of this process. Deep spirituality and awareness of cosmic coexistence caused irrationality, intuitiveness and fantasy, but also fatalism and strong conservatism. Spirituality and the rising position of women in society (caused by rising women's economic position) restrained the origin of the "masculine culture".

The established "feminine culture" gives rise to a strong emotionality, sensitive temperament, raising impulsivity, and thus also religiousness which is based on emotional sensitivity, need for transcendence, inner natural spirituality and social or economic conditions, too (faith as one of the basic certainties, which tells us that - sometime in the future - justice will come).

The natural laws of permanent cyclical rhythms (births and deaths, sowing and plowing and harvest, alternations of day and night, work and rest, seasons, and so on) were transformed into God's laws. Natural intuition developed into the traditional society mysticism and magic which was expressed in periodic rituals. Changing climatic conditions led to rise of fatalism, resignation and to trust in God and his help. Temporality also contributed to conservatism, to mistrust towards novelties and innovations, dependence on (cyclical) time-conditioned phlegmatic tem-

perament, fixedness and aversion towards changes, preference for slowness and stability.

Strong territoriality is characteristic of the traditional "peasant society". The main typical features there were strong dependence on geographical conditions and geomorphological diversity. An isolated and autonomous development strongly contributed to special territoriality. The results were a strong sense of belonging and ties to one's own territory. Thus, people were able to leave their own land and country only in the event of misery, poverty, hard times or threat, and they believed in early return. The less was such mobility, the less were exchanges and interactions, and the more was isolated development. The traditional life was limited to a local environment created by home, land, church, cemetery and community. Community was the basic unit of identification. Therefore until recently traditional "peasant" societies emphasized local and lacked national awareness. "World in mind" extension later led to a shift from parochialism to regionalism and provincialism.

The term "native country" is too abstract. The Slovak mentality needs concrete expressions and visualizations by concrete symbolic notions. It thus identifies Slovakia with the Tatras (as a symbol of freedom and pride) and with rivers as Danube, Váh, Hron. The isolated position in traditional society conditioned inattentiveness to aliens, mistrust towards strangers and closedness leading to original culture.

Common bonds such as an expression of shared territory, knowledge, values, arts, religion, were expressed in a sense of togetherness and solidarity, which together with a sensual impulsivity formed very strong sociability - sense for the others, feeling of the nears and openness to them, communicability and hospitality.

Many of the characters were (and are) socially and economically conditioned. Difficult land cultivation related to unsuitable relief, soil characteristics, and the "low technology" of cultivation based on manual work, glorified hard work and industriousness. A strong sense of work, even a need to work, together with a do-it-yourself-ability and common sense were inevitable to survive. These difficult conditions were a basis for modesty, which, however, at the same time is a retarding factor because it does not create higher things, values and needs. The results can be less demand and also less entrepreneurial spirit. The economic status of the majority of the Slovak population, subordination in social stratification, led to respect for lords and masters (and officials), to a proclivity towards acquiescence and to low self-confidence and independent acting ability. The hard work and life conditions contributed to curious inner nostalgia and sadness, but also to belief in fairness and justice together with defiance.

3 The "first modernization" of the Slovak society

The previous part of the article dealt with the psychological and social-psychological preconditions of modern Slovak society. The modernization process is closely related to the opening of autonomous traditional communities and the resulting changes in value systems, systems of beliefs, norms of behaviour, in perceiving of the world, of the self and so on. The process is interrelated with the process of rising national awareness, urbanization and industrialization, breaking-down of traditional homogeneity and the very conservative spirit.

The traditional Slovak community began to change to a great extent mainly in the late 19th century. The greater mobility of inhabitants (emigration to the U.S.A., Western Europe and other parts of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, migrations to rising cities and towns and to forming industrial areas) was a decisive factor contributing to the most important cultural changes. Accompanying alternations were social in their character: nuclear families replaced the traditional ones, the functions of women and families were also transformed (education and some of the other roles of the family were shifted to the society), changes began in the sphere of social organization: natural authorities of the elderlies were substituted by the new "artificial" authorities, institutions, bureaucracies and hierarchies. Efforts to be successful led to previously unknown envy, to unnatural effort at career, to a "power complex". The spread of new ideas, patterns, lifestyles, values, attitudes and norms especially among the young by mass media created both a generation and urban-rural gap in the society. Diffusion of urban and industrial style reflects itself in housing, lifestyle, neighbourhood, education, consumer preferences, changes in the work (as non-agricultural and non-monotonous work increased), but also in a weakening of spirituality and participation. The basic shift from folk-culture to popular culture was accompanied by a loss of sense of place, with the rising process of "placelessness".

The following totalitarian socialist practice meant nothing else than the consolidation of the already proceeding modernization processes. The very deep process of loss of inner spirituality was expressed more in a rising materialism (in spite of a lack of lifestyle and consumer ideals from mass media to imitate) than in atheism and it was conditioned by the official ideological propaganda as well as the materialist-consumeristic character of the industrialized society. Uniformity and equalitarianism became the leading principles of the society and they were closely related to ideology of equal values, equal norms, equal lifestyles, equal consumer preferences and goods, and also equal city districts and landscapes postulated by mediocracy. As a result, people lost their sense of common identity, especially in the largest cities with huge post-war immigration and melting pot functions. The communist ideal of the society's ability to manage and control all the processes and phenomena occurring within the state led to the image of an all-powerful planned

economy in which the individual was not the decisive factor. And so, the further result of the socialist planned society was a loss of self-confidence in the conditions of denial of original creativity and invention. The system was placed on the overthrown hierarchies with the intelligentsia as an enemy and the working class as the leading force in society. The system was very strong in its ideology and power, and the atmosphere of fear and lack of freedom created "communication barriers" between the people. The ideology based on a black-and-white perception of reality and the distinguishing of true-false, good-evil, us-them and so on. The formalism prevailing in society conditioned a preference for the external forms over inner content in many areas of the society. The state and its ideology laid a great stress upon individual certainties such as employment, regular income, education and housing, but that also contributed to the lack of individual independence and the contemporary comparatively disadvantaged position. The strong ideology along with repressive tools (police, state security, formal organizations) was the chief pillar of the system and in this sense culture had a very important position in the society, people's libraries, cheap newspapers and books, "accessible" theaters and concerts, cultural houses.

4 Sociocultural changes and outlines of the post-industrial society

The post-war process of modernization in the era of socialist-state developments was very isolated and closed within the boundaries of the "socialist world system" and thus it had features of a "loss of developmental continuity". Among the many differences between West and Slovakia (East) the most important were:

- 1) Diffusion of "Protestant ethic and Puritan temper" ideals (hard work, saving, respectability, sobriety and so on) from its original core (Northwestern Europe) to North America and later to other parts of the world. But the process went round Slovakia because of the Iron Curtain effect. The result is a lack of respectability in Slovakian ordinary language and life, among Slovakian politicians and businessmen.
- 2) Diffusion of individualism - which is rooted in (as wrote "postindustrial society prophet" Daniel BELL) "...secular Hobbesianism (which) is radical individualism which saw man as unlimited in his appetite" (BELL 1976, p. 80) and "the ends of production are not common but individual" (BELL 1976, p. 223) also missed Slovakia.
- 3) Accompanying rationalism and utilitarianism, diffused also from the core area in Northwestern Europe and North America, also left Slovakia untouched.
- 4) Other ideals of Western societies lost in Slovakia their developmental continuity, as in the case of the already established ideas of democracy, respectability, tolerance, responsibility. The socialist system formally declared all the rights and equalities.

- 5) Diffusion of ideals, consumer preferences, behaviour and lifestyles by the mass media recorded delayed and ideologized development.
- 6) The rising economism and consumerism paradigm conditioned, firstly in the U.S.A., rising mass production, mass culture and consumption and growth of a consumerism ideology and in the 1950s origins of the hedonist ideology. But it was very conformist and strongly conservative in its character. Rising counter-cultures in the late 1960s (hippies, social, black, students and radical movements) were excluded from the closed socialist world.
- 7) Similarly there was in Slovakia a delay in the diffusions of variabilities, multiple choices, destandardization, demassification, free-time possibilities and use and so on. Very important phenomena resulting are the multiplicity of cultures as well as disintegration of society in the contemporary (Western) world.

The third citation from the work of Daniel BELL is related to the age of modernity: "The old concept of culture is based on continuity, the modern on variety of the old values tradition, the contemporary ideal is syncretism". And the recent socio-cultural changes may be characterized by "Social life - the culture of these workers - had lost the focus of communal sociability and solidarity of the "community" and replaced it with a "privatized" or family-centred lifestyle, in which "place" played no significant part... there was a "convergence" in terms of lifestyle, attitudes and beliefs - a cultural convergence". (CLARKE 1984, p. 58).

The contemporary loss of a sense of place or the meaning of place, loss of the certainties of place, feelings of placelessness are due to a loss of place identity as a result of cosmopolitanism and globalization, a wide process of acculturation, cultural unification, and at the same time time-space compression. On the other side of the contemporary processes there is an effort to a new identification, also on the regional level: regionalism, nationalism and rising local activities are the political expressions of this process.

One of the most popular of today's futurologists Alvin Toffler (Toffler, A., 1985) describes the contemporary transition period as an encounter of two waves: the second wave is industrial in its character, the third wave information/postindustrial. In the transition era the two waves are splitting with individual and social uncertainties and tensions resulting from accompanying interests and values encounter. All the "old roots" -religion, nation, community, family, profession-are now vibrating under the pressure of acceleration. At the same time there are growing demands for an individual learning and adaptability to rapidly changing conditions. The same author (Toffler, A., 1992) gives "psychological dimensions" resulting from "future shock": irrational behaviour, simplification , confusion, apathy, nihilism, nostalgia, uncertainty and desire for a known and certain environment, exhaustion, feelings of solitude and isolation, and also drugs, mysticism or aimless violence as shock "solutions".

In the increasingly uncertain situations, accelerating and endlessly changing conditions and forced decisions there is an inevitable need of stability and certainty which is expressed in the need for a "new identification". There are the roots of the "new spirituality" related mainly to the un-organized New Age movement with strong ties to Eastern mysticism, meditation and world view, holism, subjective experience, transcendency and irrationalism, but also with dangerous threats to inner freedom (dependence on guru) or, on the contrary, with dangerous feelings of omnipotence (titanism). Culture (especially "cultural nationalism") and religion-based identifications are presented in the Megatrends 2000 (Naisbitt, J.-Aburdene, P., 1992).

The future society is based on the creation, collection, processing, evaluation, selection and distribution of information. Access to information is more or less equal in contrast to previous types of societies (access to land in pre-industrial society and to capital in industrial society). It is influencing also the relations between people and between people and society. Traditional hierarchies, built for needs of industrial society, are not satisfactory. They are replaced by the network structures are now typical of enterprises, informal organizations, social and personal relations, and even formal and political organizations (the rise of political movements as an alternative to the traditional party system). The typical features of contemporary society are thus its individualization and decentralization (Naisbitt, J., 1982). The rising role of culture in the transition period and maybe also in the future society is related to the demise of the economism paradigm, to multiplicity of choice, solutions and decisions, variability of information sources, rising needs of creativity and innovation and so on. Increasing attention is devoted to the issue of the "wholeness" of identification that was satisfied by religion ("collective conscience" of the people, social role and spiritual identity of an individual, system of shared values, satisfying of the needs for transcendence and so on). None of the recent "identification systems" satisfy this complete set of roles.

5 The transitional Slovak society: perspectives of the "second modernization".

The modernization pocess in Northwestern Europe and North America created the so called voluntary region with a very important position for the individual with a "process" of relative self- selection of life style, goals, social niche, and place of residence. (Zelinsky, W., 1973, p.111).The process is connected with changing basic unit of the society: "For Aristotle the polis is the primary unit of the society, for Catholic social theory it is the family, for classical liberalism the individual, and for modern liberalism the plural interest group" (Bell, D., 1976, p. 257). Regional and social identity is the very core of cultural identification, so necessary mainly in contemporary transition period of "identity confusion".

One of the most typical issues of Slovak society is its dual character. Duality is expressed in social and gender relations, but most typically in urban-rural contrasts. Typical traditional ("peasant") society is present first of all in rural Slovakia today. "Village lives in a consenzus of venerable traditions, habits, neighbour community" (Štefánek, A., 1944, p. 65). The country is up to the present mostly autonomous, with weak-developed contacts, mobility and information flows, with conservative social structure and value systems, more communal than social, with a narrow scale of interest spheres, little flexibility and resistance towards novelties, with indecision and so on. But, the traditional areas also contain a threat of wide decline, emigration, resulting from "uncompetitiveness" and underdeveloped infrastructure, of massive unemployment, social destabilization and loss of its own integrity. Very important factor in Slovak society is a "culturally conserved" traditional mentality in urban areas, mainly between the elderly. The territorial and population increase of the cities is very recent, and thus the population structure of the cities is to a great degree created by the "rural element". Other important issue in the towns and cities is the generation gap between the "traditionalists" and "the others" in their attitudes, values, lifestyles, idols, beliefs, images and preferences. The new urban housing quarters are typically "mix-structured" with no identity and common ties. Industrial and communist society affected the original familiar institutions (local shop, pub, church). In the traditional rural community the cultural identity was a local one (parochial) with ties to community and later to region and without ties to a larger territory (absence of "transnational" cultural identity as Europeanism or cosmopolitanism). Isolation of the village communities caused by the lesser journey to work resulting from the wide process of rural industrialization led to preservation of separate identities, customs, habits, folk songs and dances, rituals, clothing, architecture, dialects and so on. The resulting regional heterogeneity of cultures may be a comparative advantage in the future society.

Development of traditional society in the sense of the "first modernization" and beginning "second modernization" is related to shifts of "social awareness paradigms". The first important paradigm shift concerns the development of nationalism. The changes from narrow local parochialism to regional awareness led into rising national awareness in the mid-19th-century, firstly amongst the less numerous intellectuals as a transformation from communal to social identity, process of socialization of the society. The original nationalists idea of mutuality (panslavic idea, relations to Czechs leading to a common state) changed to "people's-nationalist paradigm" in the 1930s and 1940s, which in the Second-World-War period took features of xenophobia resulting perhaps from smallness and later from socialist ideology. This led to the intensification of Anti-Semitism, return to anti-hungarian attitudes, peripheralization of Gypsies and the transformation of Anti-Czechoslovakism to Anti-Czechism. The intensive drive of nationalist xenophobia is a typical feature of the 1990s, as well.

However, the contemporary world is now searching for a new "global social awareness paradigm". The industrial-economism-consumerism superparadigm is slowly and silently changed by the "new awareness" with ecological and mind ecological consciousness, deeper spirituality and responsibility, with positive emotions and love as contrasts towards hate, egoism, fear and guilt. Our society is, however, in the stage of "return to the past" in the sense of "searching for the discovered": liberalism versus conservatism, economism/industrialism/consumerism versus ecologism and responsibility, globalism and cosmopolitanism versus identity or nationalism... The search for a new paradigm in Slovak society must be related to a future "wholistic identification unit", a new religion which would replace the secularized (declined institutional authority of the church and role of the religion as a mode of community) and profanized ("set of meanings to explain mans relations to the beyond" as wrote Bell, D., 1976, p. 167) Christianity. Or would be the social-spiritual-transcendental-communal-moral base of the contemporary society be transformed Christianity once again?

The preconditions of the "second modernization" must be evaluated in a broader social context. The connections of economic transition (ownership relations transformation, sectoral restructuring, whole economic revitalization, infrastructure and finance improvements, export orientation, entrepreneurship and manufacturing and information sector supports, improved standard of living, market orientation of economy and so on), social transformation (social stratification, revival of social and gender relations, decentralization, new role of institutions and hierarchies/networks, orientation towards young generation, recovery of the role of the family as a base for education and identification of an individual...), political stability and transparency, international relations, education system transformation, influence of both public opinion creators (mass media, schools, politicians, very important persons) and decision-makers (politicians, businessmen), successes of legislation transformation, existence of prevailing authoritarian system and stabilization of the whole society (social and political consensus, long-term thinking, implementation of the long-term strategy elements into decision and planning, balanced and aimed work with clearly accentuated priorities and so on) are very important. One of the most important issues in the modernization process is the problem of social stratification. In the past, social relations in Slovakia were badly developed and broken. The already mentioned mental division into "us" and "them" are historically determined, i. e. for example "us below" and "them above" (partys, state, political representatives in the past and in the present, and contemporary upper strata, mainly businessmen, all the "them above" are "undeservedly" well-paid). The absence of a very dynamic and progressive middle strata is problematic. Special attention must be given to intelligentsia, in the past often an undervalued social group. At present the intelligentsia is not sufficiently "progress oriented" and often it is conformist, without altruism and "social invention".

Past social development created social and inner spiritual stability, "stability" of values, attitudes, norms of behaviour, lifestyles, etc., based on their homogeneity and uniformity. This uniform stability must be destroyed without unfavourable social and psychological consequences. Totalitarian and uncontinuous development broke ties to the worldwide process of democratization, social rights security, social and political responsibility and correctness and so on. Thus the first task in our society's transformation must be a reconstruction of moral and spiritual values, change in the attitudes and thinking, activation of society and direction of efforts to the individuals. The main topics of the modernization process would be the following: A process of total opening of society, replacement of xenophobia by tolerance, an increase in individual and social responsibility and activity, putting the emphasis on the individual and his self-confidence, reorientation of thinking to future and global concerns and so on. The key factor in the process is assigned to individual development, creative self-realization and activation. Society must lead its members to recognize, understand and thus to accept and tolerate all its individuals. The other great social task is to develop a responsibility, all of us must take responsibility for ourselves, for our group and society, and for the whole of nature. There are many instruments able to help with problems of modernization. Public opinion creators such as the media and the education must play a decisive role. The performing arts can also help us to understand other cultures, accept them, and live with them, thus bring the comparative advantage of "multiculturalism".

A society's readiness to fulfil tasks of the "second modernization" may use many positive features of Slovak society: openness (towards the needs and desires of neighbours), communicability, hospitality, modesty, industriousness, emotionality and "irrationality" (i.e. "weaker" and less established rationality), retention of traditional true values in the postmodern era of chaotic and opaque symbolism. Slovakia has a strong cultural tradition. Culture plays a very important role in the society, there is a great emphasis on culture in the mass media (the evening TV news are full of cultural events, education process, and there is broad people's culture. Slovak culture is mainly Western - European in its nature, but Eastern European cultural elements are present in the eastern parts of the country (there is more vigorous self-confidence, as a result of the massive emigration waves in the late 19th and early 20th century. Slovakian cultural strength may also be illustrated in the past (acculturation, i.e. cultural "assimilation" of Hungarians, spatial expansion of Detva culture and so on). A strong cultural policy is only a logical result of these tendencies and developments (the Pro Slovakia foundation covering the needs of various cultural projects, cultural policy in the education process in schools, etc.). There are, naturally, also some disadvantageous preconditions (conservatism, resistance towards aliens and resulting intolerance...) but in general comparative advantages for the future society are possible: participation, "com-

munal and neighbour feelings", warmth, creativity, ability for voluntary co-operation, strong cultural and religious roots, etc.

6 Conclusion

The contemporary character of Slovak society may well be illustrated by attitudes and preferences are reflected in elections results. The duality of the society is represented by the "traditional election pattern" of rural areas and the elderly and middle-aged generations in the towns and cities with strong conservative and populist preferences, and the "more liberal pattern" characteristic for the young generation, well educated people and inhabitants of the cities, who vote for parties with long-term strategies. An interesting phenomenon is the position of "traditionalist intelligentsia", i.e. well-educated, relatively well employed and paid and living in cities, but often expressing preferences in accordance with the "traditional pattern". Voters of nationalist parties are most numerous, the very core of the "national area" in the central and western parts of Slovakia. The last elections confirmed some of the national mentality features in their position: simplification, simplistic sense of justice, search for (external) enemies, need for strong leaders, belief in cheap promise (both in relation to the uncertainties of the transition period), emotionality and sensitivity, "olde-worlde" sentiments, need for the old values and certainties, resistance towards novelties, claims for only one (i.e. "my own") true opinion, condemnation of different opinions as heretical, treacherous and treasonable and so on.

In the light of the national character and cultural preconditions I would like to give some advice for the incomer to Slovakia. The incomer is firstly confronted with a different type of national culture. Initial contacts in the Slovak milieu are facilitated by the Slovak openness of inner self, hospitality, warmth, sensibility and communicability. Other very important and positive features are an ability to put the self in the place of others and a strong sense of justice, but there is also closedness towards foreigners and xenophobia as an extreme. In the sense of desired, business aims the incomer will be confronted with work attitudes (industriousness, but also modesty) and communicability preconditions including a sense for participation and cooperation. Very positive conditions necessary for the future societys needs include preconditions for creativity, i.e. sensibility, "positive irrationality" (intuitiveness, fantasy, imagination), impulsiveness, but also simplification as a limiting factor. The businessman must take care of conservatism (less adaptibility and new ideas acceptance) and the need to motivate and activate the employees because of less inner activity and an anxiety to rely on "external control", and because of a need to both sense and appreciate their own work. These conditions enable the use of do-it-yourself abilities and common sense.

Summary

The basic features of Slovak national character were in the past conditioned by factors of isolation, autonomous development, life and work in natural surroundings and economic and social (i.e. social status) preconditions. The resulting characteristics are conservatism, spirituality, simplification, irrationality, sensibility, creativity, communicability, industriousness, mistrust towards novelties, ties to own territory and roots, preference for stability and certainty, solidarity, hospitality, self-confidence, etc. Many of them are present in contemporary Slovak society in spite of the "first modernization" caused by emigration, openness of society, urbanization and industrialization, which led to loss of communal identity, transformation of social relations and the rise of a hierarchical social structure, changes in value systems and norms of behaviour, changing lifestyles, rising national awareness, cultural heterogeneity, and to duality of the society, especially urban-rural gap. The following socialist practice consolidated materialism, uniformity, equalitarianism, self-confidence, but also put much emphasis on culture.

The contemporary Slovak society is exposed to the inevitable requirements of systemic cultural transformations which I called the "second modernization" and which is related both to overcoming the "loss of developmental continuity" and adapting to the new (i.e. postindustrial/information/third wave) society with its network structures, strong individuality and cultural emphasis, equity of rights and accesses, tolerance and multiculturalism and with the very decisive need to find a "new identification". By "second modernization" I mean above all reconstruction of spiritual and moral values, activization of individuals and their responsibility, decentralization of the society towards individuals and their self-confidence, increasing tolerance, global and future-oriented thinking and so on.

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