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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF EDUCATION: SWEDISH REALITIES AND RUSSIAN POTENTIAL

ABSTRACT

The goal of this paper is to discuss current problems of education for sustainable development, i.e. a global educational innovation that is actively growing in the new century. In Sweden, which has extensive experience in ecological education, education for sustainable development is considered a national model for the creation of the foundation for SD. In Russia, difficulties exist in defining and achieving SD objectives. It has been demonstrated that cooperation between Russia and Sweden in the field of ESD may prove to be very successful. Such cooperation is based on historical, cultural, and geographical factors. Examples of successful cooperation are joint educational projects aimed at improving the ESD framework and its practical implementation. The results of joint projects between the two countries have been analyzed in the context of mutual interests of Russia and Sweden and new goals for cooperation have been outlines.

KEY WORDS: education for sustainable development, environmental policy, greening of education, ecological culture, preservation of cultural heritage, educational practices.

INTRODUCTION

Recognition of education as a «key factor for changes» in the transition to sustainable development (SD) has promoted the emergence of the «Education for Sustainable Development" (ESD) phenomenon. As a civilizational project, ESD has a dual nature. On the one hand, ESD is based on the well-known and sufficiently studied national educational system. On the other hand, ESD is a global innovation that needs an adequate scientific foundation because of its virtue, novelty, and the important role it will play in the world's development.

In this context, the ESD phenomenon has drawn increasing attention of researchers immediately after its emergence in the

global discourse in the 1990s. The period 2005-2014 has been declared the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD). It became an important momentum in the ESD research. The results of studies related to different ESD aspects achieved to date are impressive in their scope, breadth, and depth. Undoubtedly, this research aspect will remain relevant for many years to come.

The World Conference on ESD held in 2009 in Bonn summed the first half of the DESD and set the objectives for the second period. It is quite logical that among these objectives, was the development of SD aspects in the context of education. The Bonn Declaration calls on countries to «*encourage and enhance academic achievement, research, and new knowledge for ESD by engaging higher education institutions and research networks in ESD*" [The Bonn Declaration, 2009]. To solve this problem, it was recommended to use the «principal functions of universities, which have proved to be positive in the actual practice of modern research."

The Bonn Declaration also calls for international cooperation and for integration of the efforts of individual nations in the study of the ESD phenomenon as a means of achieving real progress in the world's SD. Responding to this call and realizing the importance of this research, a group of Russian and Swedish universities has been successfully working in this field for several years. The results of this cooperation are not only of applied but also of theoretical relevance. Among other things, its practical applicability is manifested in identification of individual features of research in the ESD field.

THE SD'S EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT IN RUSSIA AND SWEDEN

The Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development tasked the nations with «*integrating sustainable development into education systems at all levels in order to promote education as a key factor for change*» (Section X, «Means of Implementation," paragraph 121). It is crucial that the assessment of the unique role of education in the destiny of mankind contained in the above quotation not only reflects the national goals, but also knowledge gained so far.

In the USSR, a valuable experience in the priority development of the national education system for modernization of the country has been accumulated. A historic breakthrough in space, which climaxed with the first flight into space on April 12, 1961, is the striking validation of this statement. The Soviet system of education was justly recognized as one of the best in the world. It was capable to respond to all major challenges of the time, including the need of its own greening. It is not surprising that the first in human history UNESCO conference on education in the field of environment protection was held in the USSR (Georgia, 1977). Unfortunately in the post-Soviet period, many achievements of the Russian education system have been lost, giving rise to numerous risks, including de-greening of development, which clearly contradicts the national interests and rises the concerns of its neighbors.

No less valuable experience to foster education has been gained in Sweden. Accepting today's realities, for many decades, its special value and attractiveness to the global community has been the insurance of high standards of environmental performance of the national development. The first global UN Conference on Environment (Stockholm, 1972) was a logical consequence of this recognition. It is also no coincidence that Sweden is one of the obvious leaders in promoting the ideas of SD at the national and international levels and in using the most modern educational technologies.

This information is well known to Russian specialists, which explains their interest in the Swedish achievements in SD and ESD. Continued DESD, suggesting broad international cooperation, resulted in new opportunities for cooperation and exchange of best practices between countries,

including Sweden and Russia. Objectively, such cooperation is fully in the interests of both countries while meeting the goals of SD [Kasimov and Mazurov, 2010].

The initiative of Russian and Swedish specialists to cooperate in promoting environmental components of ESD in Russia is the logical development of the processes discussed above. The success of this initiative may truly contribute to a more predictable and prosperous future of the countries involved in the cooperation. At the same time, a critical examination of its content, form, and meaning is of general theoretical significance as a possible model for the formation of a «key factor of change» in today's ever more globalized world.

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY AND ESD IN SWEDEN

Society's movement towards SD is seen in modern Sweden as one of the main goals for the future. In 1969, as one of the first countries in the world, Sweden introduced its first Law on Environmental Protection. Over the years, the law was amended many times and environmental legislation in Sweden became difficult to grasp by the new rules created according to the need that arose. Some environmental laws were also available elsewhere, such as the Planning and Building Act and the Radiation Protection Act. The present Environmental Code came into force on 1 January 1999 and it is a coordinated, broader, and stricter environmental legislation for SD that merges rules from sixteen previous environmental laws.

In furtherance of efforts to green the education, in March 1992, the government charged the Swedish Council for the Renewal of Higher Education with the task of developing a special program, known as MINT (The Integrated Environmental Education Studies Program). For these purposes and under the umbrella of the Council, a special working group of teachers and students from different fields of knowledge has been organized. The group was united by a common interest in promoting SD in higher education. Supporting the efforts of national universities for education greening has become the most important task for this group. More than 35 major projects at 20 universities have been implemented towards meeting this goal.

The MINT's efforts have been mostly focused on presenting the results of scientific research obtained in various SD areas in relevant published sources. A section with specific instructions about using the results by both teachers and students became mandatory in these publications. Other actions of MINT included: the annual conference «Greenspiration» (ecological inspiration) for students and university staff with representatives from the production sector that participate in shaping the employment field for future graduates; professional exchanges of groups of teachers and students with universities in countries that have achieved significant progress in development of ESD (in particular, with universities in Netherlands); support of participation of Swedish students in the National Student Environmental Network (*Svenska Ecodemiker*); special grants to Swedish teachers for the development of training courses related to SD and based on opinions of both experts and students.

Active work on the greening of higher education in Sweden is highly appreciated in Europe. This work led to the initiation and promotion of similar activities in neighboring countries. As a result, in May 2002, the countries of the Baltic Sea region have adopted an agreement on the development of education in the field of SD in the region *"Baltic 21 E"* to enhance cooperation and exchange of good practice in this field. It is significant that the signing countries call Sweden the *«regional and global leader in achieving SD environmentally,»* and acknowledge its leadership in the ESD development.

The undoubted success of Sweden in the development of ESD may be also explained, among other factors, by the active position of its government. This statement is supported by the speech of former Swedish Prime Minister G. Persson at the Global Summit on

SD in Johannesburg on 3 September 2002, «*One of the basic conditions of progress and social activity is education. We would like to see more teachers involved in the discussion of the impact of our lifestyles on the environment. Universities should include courses on global survival in the major educational programs...*».

Educational policy in Sweden is definitely focused on the active and direct involvement of its citizens in greening of the country, treated as a basic condition for its SD. The most important form of environmental policy in Sweden was the implementation of the 1998 social-democratic government's bill "*Swedish Environmental Objectives: An Environmental Policy for a Sustainable Sweden.*"

As stated in this document, the goal of environmental policy is *"to hand over to the next generation a society in which Sweden's major environmental problems have been solved"* [Sweden's Environmental Objectives, 2008]. In accordance with this national program in the country, 16 priority goals (directions) of the environmental policy (Fig. 1) have been set. Under this policy, specific targets were identified, whose achievement should be secured by 2020.

It is important to note that policymakers estimated fairly precisely the cost of achieving the goals of the environmental policy. The growth of the cost of environmentally oriented projects will be about 50% relative to the base

Fig. 1. A long-term strategy on the greening of the country is presented as 16 areas of environmental policy

level of funding for this sector at the end of 1990, or 20 billion SEK a year in real terms, including no less than 8 billion SEK from the government's budget. The final cost has been set at the level of 60 billion SEK annually, which amounts to about 2% of the modern GDP [Sweden's Environmental Objectives, 2208: 338]. The structure of the expenses has also been defined in terms of both the areas for allocation and the financing sources. Bulk of spending is associated with business and municipal budgets in full accordance with the internationally accepted principle *«polluter pays.»* The total expenditures correspond to the gross value of environmental taxes and charges collected in the country.

The level of 2% of GDP is a relatively small fee for creating a lasting ecological foundation for SD. It is known that the most economically developed countries in the 1960s and 1970s paid much more for a way out of the acute stage of the ecological crisis, i.e., up to 6–8% of their GDP with Japan spending 11%. However, the following information must be considered.

First, Sweden has generally achieved the most advanced environmental infrastructure, created previously by investing predominantly during the postwar decades. These investments have already solved the basic environmental problems (environmental safety, preservation of natural heritage, and sustainable use of natural resources) and allowed achieving high environmental standards of society as a whole (Fig. 2). In essence, we are talking about financing irreversible state of the already manifested positive trend of key environmental parameters.

Second, one should bear in mind that creating a lasting ecological basis for SD in Sweden has been achieved not only through the realization of the goals stated in the document. The actual total cost of achieving these goals is higher than 2% of the environmental investments mentioned above. At the present level of economic development, it is difficult to define the total expenditures in absolute terms, as well as the value of the total economic impact of such expenditures. However, we can consider with confidence such effect as existence of positive environmental externalities in the socialization of environmental policy.

Third, the specifics of the modern environmental policy in Sweden is associated with more clear synthesis of advanced environmentally-oriented scientific technologies («new natural resource use») of the 6th technological wave and the active civil position of the overwhelming

Fig. 2. A metallurgical plant in Luleå, in December 2008. Conditions of snow cover represent one of the most obvious indicators of industrial ecological conditions

majority of the citizens in relation to the adopted public policy on SD. Specifically, it is manifested in the fact that since the late 1990s, there has been active work to achieve the 16 environmental goals well known to the public in Sweden. This work has actually become a form of systematic greening of society, the original national model for the formation of ecological basis for SD. It is crucial that during this period, education, at all levels, was considered an important condition for realization of the stated environmental policy.

In Sweden, an important prerequisite for progress in this area is the responsible attitude of the country's specialists towards incorporation of education in SD, their self-criticism, readiness for systematic evaluation of ongoing projects, and deep understanding of their social aspects. K. Sammalisto, MINT's representative, wrote, *«We must realize that most of the work we do is like planting seeds that will take years and possibly even decades to become a fruit"* [Sammalisto, 2002: 31]. These words are so characteristic of Swedish realism, but without any compromise in relation to the country's adopted standards and to the principles of development respected by the neighbors and are attractive to them for replication. It is clear that Russia is one of the most objectively interested nations.

One of the important «background» factors of Sweden's national environmental policy is to contribute to the greening of the neighboring countries and of other countries in need of this policy. Often, such assistance may be provided on a sustained basis. Thus, the strategy of cooperation with Russia states, *«The preferential direction of the Swedish-Russian cooperation in development should continue to be deepening of democracy, economic reforms, social protection, environment, collective security, as well as education and research»* (http://www.rurik.se/index.php?id=38). This implies that ESD, really integrating all of these areas, is the logical priority of bilateral cooperation.

ESD IN RUSSIA

As it is widely recognized in the world, achievements of environmental education (EE) and the greening of education in general became a launching pad of ESD. Russia has been among the world's leaders in this field. From 1995 to the present time, the number of Russian universities, where environmental specialties were launched, increased from 2 to 160. Practically all higher educational institutions associated with geographical, biological, and environmental education became involved in one way or another in promoting ESD [Education for Sustainable Development: Experience of..., 2008; Education for Sustainable Development in Higher Education of Russia..., 2008].

The following achievements can be named as the most important socio-economic consequences of EE at the national level in Russia:

- Mitigating manifestations of ecological crisis in the country;
- Developing environmental infrastructure;
- Ensuring access to environmental information;
- Increasing environmental awareness of the population;
- Establishing a network of environmental non-governmental organizations as part of civil society.

However, one must admit that the aforementioned results did not provide for a decisive turning point in trends of dynamics of the ecological situation in the country. Among other things, this situation is aggravated by the emergence of new global challenges that have significant national component relevant to Russia. These challenges include: global climate change, increasing threat of natural disasters, increasing problem of access to quality water, the problem of food quality, the collapse of the system of waste management, etc. The discrepancy factor (development gap) between the educational system (formal and informal) and the challenges of the time represents one of the reasons of worsening of the world's ecological conditions.

In Russia, continuing challenges of the "transition period" are superimposed onto the background global ecological problems. One of the challenges is the lack of proper coordination in the environmental and related areas of national policy. Here is a typical example of its manifestation: some experts [Dumnov, 2011, p. 62] suggest that the modern environmental policy costs Russia about 1-2% of its GDP. In fact, it is the same cost level as in Sweden for the modern program of ecological modernization, as noted above. If, however, in Sweden these costs provide for a consistent system of the country's greening, in Russia, they are not even sufficient for the maintenance of the existing environmental situation. In Sweden, ecological modernization is carried out with targeted support for education and culture in general, which created a powerful synergistic pressure and became, in essence, a driving force for the effective development of ESD in the country. In Russia, this is not currently possible because of the actual exclusion of the educational and cultural sectors from the environmental policy.

In recent years, researchers in the sphere of education and training have repeatedly noted that the basic ideas of ESD are inherent in the traditional Russian education established in the pre-Soviet and the Soviet periods [Kasimov and Mazurov, 2007]. It is also known that the widely recognized achievements of the Soviet education system are largely due to its intrinsic link with academic science. One would expect that a comprehensive system of ESD, for which methodological, organizational, and political conditions exist, will actively develop on a firm and sustainable foundation of EE in Russia. However, often being the driving force, EE becomes simply a substitute for ESD.

Among other problems of ESD, the slow integration of SD in the industry and the general courses, the weak interaction between secondary and higher education, and the lack of motivation of teachers, academia, governmental officials, and educational authorities should be noted. The lack of established management practices and implementation of ESD in schools undermines the success. There remains a deficit of finance and personnel for ESD. All this occurs at the background of the general low priority of SD issues in society.

However, in modern Russia there are many examples of achievements in the ESD field. Among them:

- understanding foreign experience in the formation of ESD and similar educational paradigms;
- researching the principle paths to the greening, humanization, and socialization of education, both formal and informal, from preschool to postgraduate;
- developing innovative models of ESD in the form of training programs, educational courses, teaching development, etc.;
- adapting the ESD potential to the challenges of the time and to specific nature of education.

It is quite natural that all those concerned with the success of ESD are more interested in the problems hindering its development in Russia. Most often, the following problems are named:

- weak support for ESD as a new educational paradigm from the authorities, especially at the regional and local levels;
- relatively low social status of SD ideas due to a certain imputation by society;
- overall degradation of the system of education and culture in the post-Soviet period;
- low awareness of nearly entire educational community of the advanced achievements of other countries in the field.

In this situation, one of the most effective means of changing the situation for the better that utilizes the concepts of social psychology and mentality of Russian citizens could be the appeal to the positive experience of the world's community. Obviously, this must be a compelling experience of those countries whose achievements are well known and are not doubted by the majority

of the Russian population. An important fact in this case is the high moral authority of Sweden. Among not so many countries that meet the criteria mentioned, Russian people consistently refer to Sweden that in many ways embodies the principles of social justice and civic responsibility. These circumstances determine the natural interest in the Russian society to the Swedish model of SD, which serves as the basic premise of the Russian-Swedish cooperation in the field of ESD.

BACKGROUND FOR COOPERATION AND INTERESTS OF THE PARTIES

Potentially high efficiency of the Russian-Swedish cooperation in the field of ESD is granted, along with relevance, by the presence of significant, though often non-so-obvious, premisses. Geographical proximity, common historical roots, and mutual interest of the people to each other are the major factors. The magnitude and specific character of manifestations of these assumptions predetermine the interest of the parties to cooperate and to format real parameters of cooperation.

The factor of geographical proximity is manifested in the common interests with respect to different natural objects, connecting or separating the countries. The Baltic Sea and the Barents Sea region are the most important areas for our countries; their welfare is largely predetermined by the responsible treatment by Russia and Sweden.

The proximity provides for the similarities in climatic conditions in Sweden and a large part of Russia. These similarities make possible cooperation of neighbors in formulation and implementation of environmental policies, in monitoring the state of the environment, in ecological adaptation of industrial technologies, and in coordination of the efforts to format environmental frameworks of the territories and «new natural resources use» as an essential component of the 6th global technological wave as a whole.

Spatial proximity makes it possible to minimize costs in foreign trade and a wide range of international relations. However, the proximity factor is associated with inevitable risks of problems transfer from one country to the territory of its neighbors. It is known that Russian territories are under the influence of «western transfer» of air masses. For Russia, this means that up to 60% of the modern background air pollution in the western region is due to emissions of air pollutants from Western Europe. Hence, the obvious interest of Russia is to further green the production of its Western neighbors.

Obviously, the factor of «western transfer» does not guarantee the safety of Sweden in case of accidents or other significant abnormal events in Russia. The most striking example in this respect has been the situation associated with the consequences of the Chernobyl accident in 1986. Fig. 3 shows the impressive magnitude of the isotope Cs-137 affecting about 40% of Sweden as a result of rainfall immediately after the accident. To date, the concentration of this radioactive pollutant has decreased substantially, but awareness of the need to prevent such incidents has clearly grown in the Swedish society.

For most Swedish people, radiation pollution is not just an abstract concept. Effective environmental education in the country and the availability of environmental monitoring data provided for a high level of environmental awareness and culture of Swedish people. For the most part, environmental education allows one to adequately assess potential risks, including radioactive contamination of the environment and food products. In Sweden, it is a well known fact that the two major peaks of radioactive isotope Cs-137 in milk produced in its territory are related to the effects of the events in the east of its borders (Fig. 4). The first peak is associated with the consequences of nuclear weapons tests at the climax of the Cold War and the other one is due to the Chernobyl accident.

The proximity to the country that has already twice subject Sweden to unacceptable environmental risks is a permanent factor of concern to the public and the government

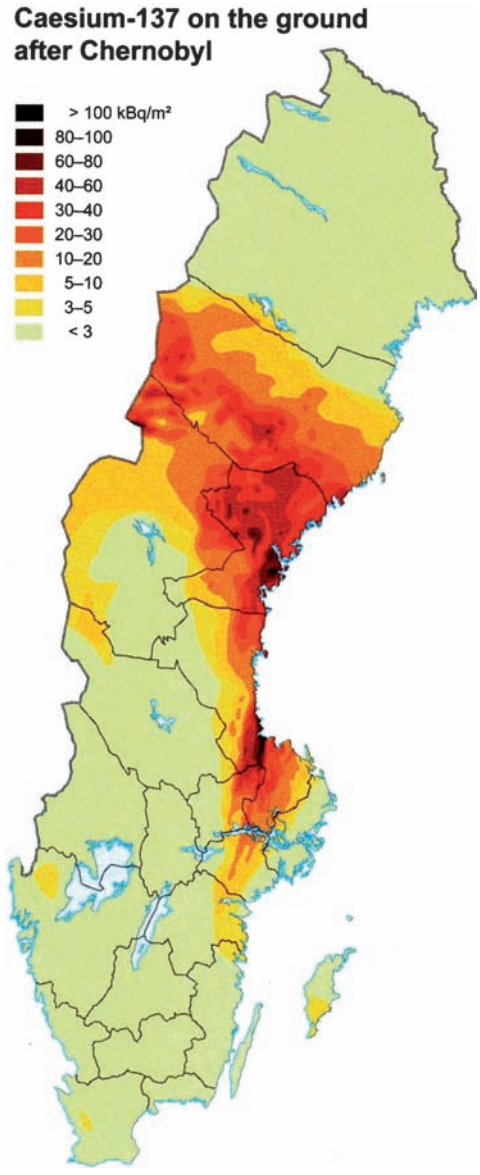

Fig. 3. Distribution of Cs-137 as a result of the Chernobyl accident (Source: [Bernes and Lundgren, 2009: 148])

of this nation. In Sweden, it is understood that the best way to minimize such risks is Russia's transition to a real model of SD, which is possible by a successful promotion of ESD. This fact plays the role of a decisive condition to the countries' cooperation in this sphere.

Existence of common historical roots is an important factor of the contemporary relations between the countries and the people. Such long-term relations have been established between the people of the two neighboring countries – .Sweden and Russia. The arena of the relationship was originally the Baltic coast, the North-Western Russia, and the historical path «from the Varangian to the Greeks" starting from the first Swedish capital Birka and extending through the lands of the eastern Slavs (Gardariki – "the kingdom of cities," in the Vikings' interpretation).

Historical information about ethnic contacts at that time is extremely scarce. But what is known often relates to territorial rivalries, i.e., contacts with the negative sign. Among them, is the famous, in Russian history, Battle of the Neva (July 15, 1240), i.e., the Battle on the Neva River between the people's militia of Novgorod, under the command of Prince Alexander Yaroslavich, and the Swedish troops. For the victory and for his personal courage, Prince Alexander was given the honorary name of «Nevsky.»

Since then, the severity of the disputes between the two neighbors only grew, reaching its apogee in the Northern War. The battle of Poltava became the principle event for these disputes. The victory over the army of Charles XII, the strongest in Europe at that time, as well as the construction of a naval fortress of St. Petersburg for protection

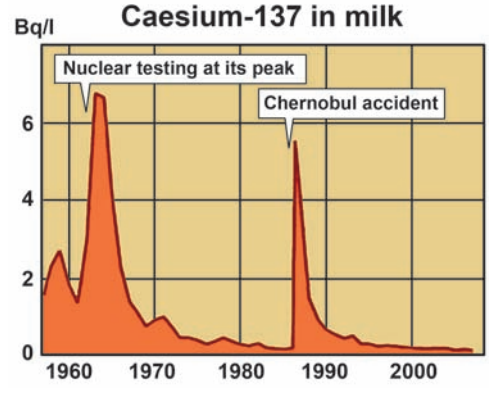

Fig. 4. Dynamics of the concentration of Cs-137 in milk produced in Sweden. According to the Swedish Radiation Safety Authority (Source: [Bernes and Lundgren, 2009: 149])

against the «*haughty neighbor*» [A.S. Pushkin, "Bronze Horseman"] came to Russia at great expense. For Russia, Sweden remained the most problematic neighbor until 1809 (the last war in the Swedish history) that could not but leave a negative trace in the historical memory of the Russian people. Something similar is probably typical, to some extent, and for the Swedish mentality. It is demonstrated by the exposition «*The Russian Outrages*» showing the destruction of the iron mines by the Russian Expeditionary Forces in 1719, in the museum on the island of Utö and by the monumental Charles XII in the central Stockholm with his hand pointing towards Russia (Fig. 5).

However, not all in our shared history can be written in dark colors only. The most striking exception to this general picture is the St. Anne of Novgorod (Fig. 6), one of the most revered figures in the Russian Orthodoxy. She was the daughter of the Swedish King Olaf Sketktung, the "All-Christian King." In Sweden, she was known as Princess Indigherd and married Yaroslav the Wise, Grand Prince of Kiev,

Fig. 5. Monument to Charles XII in the center of Stockholm

Fig. 6. St. Anna of Novgorod. An orthodox icon from the museum in Sigtuna, Sweden

in 1016, taking the name Irene, consonant with her original Swedish name. In folk traditions of Scandinavia, Indigherd is remembered as a woman of selflessness, possessing a kind heart, intelligent, courageous, and adventurous, who always kept a significant impact on circumstances she encountered by fate.

After moving into her husband's homeland, the princess adhered to its interests and was guided only by them in her relations with the countries of Scandinavia rather than by her native kinship. In many ways, it is her personal influence and the family ties that contributed to the peaceful and friendly relations between Russia and Sweden, which were especially strengthened after her arrival in Russia and did not interrupt for a substantial period of time. In this respect, prominent places in the relations are also occupied by her relatives, e.g., by her brother Jacob, who served for a long time in Russia, by the husband of her sister, i.e., the Norwegian King Olaf, by her relative on the mother (Slavic) line, Earl Rognvald Ulfson, and by his three sons.

According to the marriage contract, Princess Irina was given a large parish – .the city Aldeygaborg (later Ladoga, now the village of Staraya Ladoga) with its domain. This region's boundaries appear to coincide with what later became known as Ingria (or

Ingermanland). Translated from Finnish, this place name means "*Land of Ingegerd*" and has its origin, in all probability, in the name of the wife of Yaroslav.

She was a mother of seven sons and three daughters who later became the queens of Norway, Hungary, and France. Among her grandchildren is Prince Vladimir Monomakh. Widowed, she became a nun named Anna. She died in Novgorod, having before her death the schema with the name Anna. Ingegerd Irene's tonsure was the first in the grand house that began the tonsure tradition by the Russian princes and princesses after the execution of their duties as rulers of the people.

Information presented above states the known historical facts that are, however, still underestimated as significant factors in the cultural context of the Russian-Swedish relations. This discussion is not intended to substitute the existing geographical proximity by a virtual cultural, but it reflects the pattern of some similarities in the system of cultural values, which is supported by the well-known cultural studies. Thus, on the Cultural Map of the World (Fig. 7), R. Inglehart and C. Welzel put Russia and Sweden at about the same level in the upper part of the coordinate axis *The Traditional/Secular-Rational Values*. However, in the system of *Survival/Self-Expression Values*, the authors place these two cultures in diametrically opposing positions [Inglehart, Welzel, 2005].

The map reflects the authors' interpretation of the system of ethnic cultural values. Not all elements of this map that relate to Russia and Sweden are accepted without reservations. However, this map correctly reflects the presence of not only fundamental differences, but also of similarities in the cultures, specifically, in the system of ethnic values and historical communication between the people.

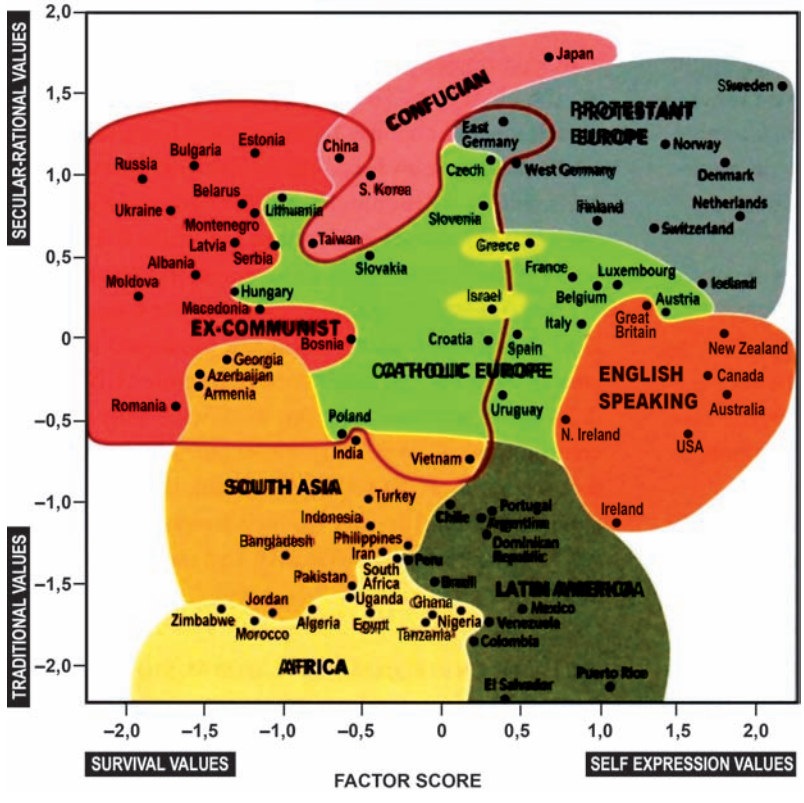

Fig. 7. Cultural Map of the World [Inglehart, Welzel, Press, 2005: p. 64]

The historical relations and features of the cultures explain the mutual interest of the people of Russia and Sweden to each other. In the most obvious form, this interest is manifested in the tourism sector whose extent and dynamics strongly support the existence of such interest.

The mutual interest of the people of the two countries as a social phenomenon has been insufficiently considered. However, it is clear that the fact of existence of this interest in itself indicates not only the differences between the two geographically close cultures, but also the similarities manifested in the mutual mental and spiritual values. This is reflected in how the Russian people perceive the works of Swedish children's writer Astrid Lindgren. Her fiction characters – *Pippi Longstocking, Lillebror, Karlsson-on-the-Roof* – .are the archetypes of modern Sweden. At the same time, these characters have been living in Russian culture for decades (in books, theater, movies, TV, life, etc.) and they have blended in with it so organically that they are largely accepted by the Russian people as a part of their culture. This situation, for all its seemingly paradoxicality, has profoundly legitimate roots and signifies the fact that common values are undoubtedly shared.

Among common, for the two people, values, their stance on fairness occupies a special place as the main category of the SD ideology. In fact, specifically this value is at the core of modern Swedish society that has the world's minimal decile coefficient. Social fairness is the basic principle of the model of «Swedish socialism,» the widely known and popular in the world and deeply rooted in this country. Social justice is a priority value of Russian mentality no less than in Sweden, which can be seen, in particular, from both classical Russian literature and the experience of social practices of the XXth century. This kind of social experiments and achievements cannot but to be attractive to the neighboring nations.

As one of the most important reasons for the similarities in the systems of values of Swedish and Russian people is the actual identity of landscape environment that contributes to the formation of ethnic groups. In essence, the natural conditions of Northwestern Russia and Central Scandinavia are very close, which means that the people of these countries had a typologically common «nourishing landscape» [Gumilev, 1990], which led to their commitment to a common, in many respects, system of spiritual values. An example of the Swedish interpretation of the image of the national cultural heritage provided below supports this statement. Fig. 8 shows a photograph of a rural estate on the cover of the Swedish national atlas of cultural heritage. The authors of the atlas used this photograph to demonstrate a typical image of the rural environment.

Thus, the archetype of the national cultural heritage in Sweden is not a royal palace, or a cathedral, or a castle, but the rural landscape with its characteristic features, i.e., birch trees, boulders, a fence around the pasture, a manor house. It is paradoxical but true: structurally, the Swedish and the

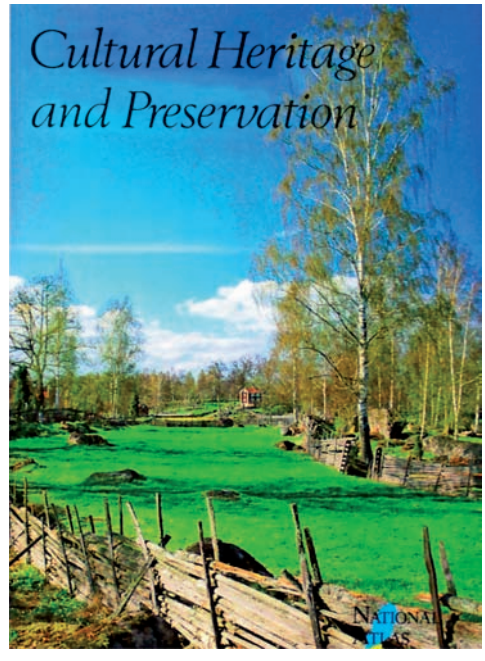

Fig. 8. The iconic rural landscape on the cover of the Swedish national atlas of cultural heritage

Russian archetypes are identical and their components are similar. For example, birch is one of the most typical symbols of the Russian landscape.

THE RUSSIAN-SWEDISH PROJECT IN THE FIELD OF ESD

Since 2008, under the framework of international cooperation, a Russian-Swedish educational project aimed at improving the conceptual principles of ESD and their implementation has been successfully implemented. The results of the project obtained represent interest not only to the participants of the project but contribute also to understanding the cooperation potential between different countries in the field of ESD.

The interest of both nations in exchange of positive experiences served as impetus to the joint ESD project. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of Russia has expressed its intent to cooperate with the Swedish Agency for Environmental Protection (SEPA). Several entities within scientific-educational community became involved too: the Russian Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Russian Federation (RAPA), M.V. Lomonosov Moscow State University, and three leading universities of Sweden in the ESD area: universities of the cities of Lund and Uppsala and Luleå University of Technology.

The first phase of the project aimed at supporting the development of ESD in Russia was successfully implemented from September 2008 to January 2009. It resulted in development and successful organization of a joint Russian-Swedish seminar on ESD for public officials who determine the national environmental policy in Russia (Fig. 9). The high evaluation of the results of the first phase by both the organizers and the participants of the pilot workshop identified the need for development of activities initiated, which led to the adoption of joint decisions on a continuation of the project.

The scope of the second phase of the project, designed for 2010–2012, includes communication of experiences in ESD and identification, development, and testing of new educational methods for further education of civil servants in the field of sustainable management in Russia (Fig. 10). Particular attention in the project is focused on the key concepts of SD, i.e., environmentally efficient economy, biodiversity, sustainable cities, ecological footprint, cleaner production, sustainable consumption, renewable

Fig. 9. The final part of the training workshop for civil servants in the RAPA: Mr. A. Mikaelson (SEPA) and President of RAPA Prof. A.M. Margolin hand the certificates to the participants

Fig. 10. An educational session of the ESD project in Vladimir, in November 2010: general discussion

energy, and energy efficiency. Interaction with other projects within the Swedish-Russian cooperation in the environmental field has been also considered, especially, in the Barents Sea and the Baltic regions.

The main idea of the second phase of the project is to develop and improve approaches to the system of extended education and retraining of civil servants and decision makers by organizing and conducting educational seminars in the relevant fields. Target audience includes government officials responsible for environmental policy and decision making in the appropriate federal government bodies of Russia, as well as members of scientific and educational institutions engaged in ESD. The project involves implementation of the 12 areas combined into three main parts: 1) training session, 2) information dissemination, and 3) assessment and recommendations.

Systematic monitoring of the project includes assessment of its activities by the participants of the training seminars. Summarizing the results of their educational activities can provide the audience with the "core" of experience gained. The areas most often emphasized by the participants of the seminars include: relevance of such forms of educational practice; demand for the Sweden's experience to promote SD in Russia and to involve ESD potential in the process; high scientific and methodical level of ongoing sessions; practical benefits gained from the sessions to the members and to the areas of their occupation; and prospects for similar educational projects.

THE FIRST RESULTS OF THE PROJECT AND THEIR UNDERSTANDING

To date, the first results of the project have been obtained, including:

- the original concept of educational seminars for professionals of environmental policies on SD (goals, program, target audience, and partnership);
- algorithm for training and seminars on SD through international cooperation (action plan, logistics, program, and participation

ratio between Russian and Swedish educators);
- experience in conducting SD seminars within the Russian-Swedish project (testing the concept and the algorithm);
- assessment of the past workshops by the participants that is representative of all major components of assessment (content of seminars, their form, and results).

Other important findings include: widening and deepening the participants' knowledge about Sweden as a neighbor of Russia and as one of the world's leaders in the field of SD and ESD; deepening mutual understanding of the participants – .citizens of Russia and Sweden; strengthening good neighborly relations between Russia and Sweden; and obtaining unique international cooperation experience in education in general and in ESD specifically.

Comprehension of the results of the project is the basis for its overall positive evaluation. Such assessment is primarily based on the opinion polls of the participants of the past educational seminars most of whom regarded such seminars as extremely relevant and useful. According to the results of the pilot project, which was confirmed later by the subsequent project activities, there is a possibility of replicating the project in Russia and other countries. The partnership between the Russian and the Swedish parties established in the course of the project demonstrated its high efficiency based on close understanding, in both cultures, of such fundamental categories of SD as fairness and responsibility.

Problems that emerged during the implementation of the project can be divided into objective and subjective. The objective problems include, above all, the low status of SD ideology in Russia, its known discrediting in Russian society, and its weak support, including state financial support. In recent years, the situation in this area has been changing for the better. In particular, the support for the SD ideas has being increasingly clearly expressed by the Russian Orthodox Church. However, the problems mentioned above will continue to be significant with the existing trends. The subjective problems are associated with selection of participants, team alignment, and providing participants with relevant educational materials (literature, information, etc.).

A review of the SD issues in the educational context suggests the following key findings:

1. Ideally, ESD is a synthesis of cultural (spiritual) values and educational technologies that allow integrating these values into society;

2. The ESD subjects is the integration of a pair of basic categories of the SD ideology, i.e., fairness and accountability, in the key areas of social life at all hierarchical levels;

3. A prerequisite for effective ESD is the interest in the diffusion of educational innovations (such as in teaching and in training);

4. Swedish realities of the ESD scope make them attractive for diffusion as the innovation to all participants of potential partnerships. Russia's potential in this sphere can be greatly strengthened by adopting the achievements of Sweden, which is facilitated by territorial proximity and by similarities of values.

One of the main findings of the interpretation of the results of the project consists of the presence of real and significant potential of the Russian-Swedish cooperation in the field of ESD. Another important finding is associated with an extremely poor use of this existing potential. In the future, there may be two possible scenarios for the relationship between the stakeholders: 1) the potential as a treasure (the value that is removed from circulation), or 2) the potential as a capital (the value that creates a new value).

Critical evaluation of the progress of the project in the context of the mutual interests of Russia and Sweden raises the question about new challenges and prospects of bilateral cooperation in the field of ESD. The main task is to convert the potential of this cooperation into

the real capital of our countries' development and to make it work not on a case-by-case basis, but systematically and effectively in the interests of SD of the people of Russia, Sweden, and the world in general. Speaking of the latter, undoubtedly, the idea of establishing international ESD standards has a great potential. The Russian-Swedish project has demonstrated its relevance and came very close to its formatting in a particular educational context.

CONCLUSION

The Bohn Declaration on ESD of 2009 states that, *"ESD is a new direction in education and training for everyone. It promotes quality education and applies to all people. It is based on values, principles, and methods that are necessary to respond effectively to existing and potential challenges"* [The Bonn Declaration, 2009].

It is this interpretation of ESD in Sweden and its adoption at the state level that allowed this country to make an impressive step towards a sustainable and predictable future. The same interpretation has its historical background in the Russian national education system as well. In the interest of the country, it can and must be transformed into the national policy that would incorporate into life virtually uncontested principles of SD. The formula for success on this path can be defined as a synthesis of national traditions and innovations of the advanced world and, among them, of the impressive achievements of Sweden.

Thus, the Russian-Swedish cooperation in the field of ESD is important for both countries. If successful, Russia would effectively promote the idea of SD and Sweden would obtain a more predictable and environmentally friendly neighbor and partner. ■

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