

Specificity of Social Existence in Megalopolis

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Introduction. The main feature of society of the 21st century is mass consumption of goods, services, information, ideas, etc. which is clearly manifested in a megalopolis where peculiar conditions of human existence, specific mentality, different from the mentality of residents of a small town or village, are created. Traditional values and customs are transformed or neglected there.

Aim. The aim of the study is to analyse factors determining specific character of human existence in a megalopolis.

Material and Methods. An inductive method, a deductive method, a method of system analysis, a comparative method, an analytical-prognostic method, a method of sociological poll.

Results. Rapid development of cities is a consequence of transformational processes taking place in the modern world. In sociology, typical social and existential crises of megalopolis inhabitants (loneliness, social insecurity, deviant behaviour) have long been identified, which gives grounds to argue about an increased risk of loss of existential meaning of being and development of depression and suicidal attitudes among megalopolis inhabitants. In the rapid whirlpool of indifference and self-sufficiency of a megalopolis, an individual resident's loneliness is particularly acute as others are captured by problems of their own survival and comfort. Megalopolis inhabitants are forced to live at fast, exhausting pace, each day consuming significant flows of services and information provided both directly and indirectly through advertising that captures all the visual space and causes consequent inhabitants' sensory and psychological reactions. Megalopolis inhabitants are forced to choose between the two extremes – either consumer euphoria, or consumer despair.

Advertising forms standards of behaviour, determines actions and decisions of megalopolis inhabitants, influences political and economic preferences, creates a space of hyperreality of existence where meaning of real things and relations becomes meaningless being substituted by their replicas and simulacra. Unlike a village or town, where living conditions are quite moderate, in a megalopolis the contrast between poverty and wealth is strikingly highlighted. Unemployment, ethnic and multi-cultural conflicts, a much higher crime rate are also realities in a big city. The value of communication is neglected as it often has a utilitarian character. However, more tolerant treatment of civil marriage, attention to disabled people and migrants, creation of charitable organisations, homeless shelters, etc. can be considered as certain advantages of a megalopolis.

Conclusions. In a modern megalopolis lifestyle, people have more opportunities to meet their cultural, educational and creative needs. A megalopolis is a social space and simultaneously a social organism which lives and functions according to its own laws, creates a peculiar model of social existence. Flows of information, services, finance form megalopolis inhabitants' view of world which has its social and cultural manifestations.

RĪGA STRADIŅŠ UNIVERSITY

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Problems Associated with the Right of Access in Context of the Rights of the Child <i>I. Kudeikina</i>	68
Classical and Rapid Recovery Physiotherapy Approach of Total Hip Arthroscopy in Slovakia <i>P. Kutis, M. Kozel, M. Lehotska</i>	69
Specificity of Social Existence in Megalopolis <i>S. Kutsepal, Y. Perebyinis, N. Zinchenko</i>	70
Assessment of Latvian Army Soldier's Energy Consumption Used Different Tactical Load Carrying Systems <i>E. Lace, R. Ceseiko, A. Vetra</i>	71
Physical Activity in Healthy Urban Adults and Its Association with Body Composition Parameters <i>R. Lagzdina, M. Rumaka</i>	72
Quality-Work-Competence among Latvian Nurses: Comparison of Different Education Levels <i>S. Lakisa, A. Papparde, K. Circenis, I. Vanadziņš</i>	73
Skin Cancer Screening – Better Safe than Sorry <i>M. Lange, E. V. Plorina, I. Lihacova, J. Spigulis, A. Derjabo</i>	74
Problems of Access to Justice in Rural Areas: Example of Ukraine <i>A. Lapkin</i>	75
Are There Urban-Rural Reproductive Health Disparities in Latvia? <i>G. Lazdane, D. Rezeberga, I. Pudule, I. Zile, I. Gavare</i>	76
Role of Key Agents in Transformation of Healthcare System in Lithuania <i>V. Leonavicius</i>	77
Medical Error and Its Treatment in Latvian Legal System <i>A. Liepins</i>	78
Smoking and Alcohol Abuse – Predictive Factors in Oropharyngeal Squamous Cell Carcinoma (A Retrospective Study) <i>A. Lifšics, V. Groma, E. Rate, M. Murovska, J. Tars</i>	79
Coping with Death and Awareness of Mortality in Patients and Their Relatives <i>V. Līttva, A. Kralova</i>	80
Cloud-Based Integrated Socio-Sanitary Care e-Services in Croatia: Lessons Learned <i>I. Ljubi, H. Belani, S. Belosevic-Romac</i>	81
Operating Room Nurses' Assessment of Safety Climate in Riga City Hospitals <i>G. Logina, A. Ribakova</i>	82
Analysis of Efficiency of Housing Adaptation in Jelgava City <i>I. Lomonovska, S. Tomšone</i>	83
Students Interaction with Therapy Dog at West Virginia University Setting <i>M. Lotko</i>	84
Ethnographies of Help-Seeking in Homesteads of Vidzeme and Latgale 90 Years Ago and Now. Choosing Between Services Provided in Urban vs. Rural Settlements <i>A. Luse</i>	85
Aerobic Capacity for Breast Cancer Survivors Two to Three Years after Breast Surgery <i>L. Majevska, R. Ceseiko, S. Tomšone, A. Vetra</i>	86
Reproductive Health Status of Schoolchildren in Kazakhstan <i>D. Makhanbetkulova</i>	87