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STRATEGIES FOR ESCAPING FROM THE CITY

The coronavirus pandemic has forced hand people to think about moving from the city to the countryside: it turned out that they can live comfortably while working remotely [1]. However, many habitants of metropolises who complain about city life do not actually make efforts to radically change their place of residence. Even some of the classics of urban theories can be an example of this. Thus, Jean Baudrillard, the author of “The City and Hatred”, spent his entire conscious life in metropolises among the society of the spectacle and simulacra he exposed. But there are citizens who really leave the boring everyday life, preferring downshifting (from the English downshifting – lit. switching the car to a lower gear, slowing down).

The tense and monotonous urban tempo-rhythm, competition, emotional burnout and the cult of consumption naturally give rise to a stressful background. As a result of the continuous high-speed race for benefits, one’s own freedom is curtailed and the feeling of joy disappears. Many people in big cities find many opportunities for self-development. This puts an idea into head that both fatigue from the city and escape from it depend on subjective factors, emotional intelligence, and strength of character in Homo Urbanus. In this regard, consider three strategies for escaping from the city: infantile, rational and “enlightened”.

An infantile escape from the city is escapism (from the English escape – to escape, to disappear) – a departure from a monotonous nervous life into

a space of otherness. The root causes may be a protest against the pressure of society, a spiritual crisis, hopelessness, fear and boredom, or in today's conditions – COVID-19. In the conditions of lockdown, this is either surfing the Web or deep immersion in the gaming space up to customization – the maximum adjustment of the game character for yourself in RPG-type role-playing games that lock the player in four walls for a long time. The keys to correcting escapism are in self-awareness of the problem and in seeking professional psychotherapeutic help.

A childish dream of a wonder and a romantic belief in a “lost paradise” can explain the tendency of many citizens to fly away forever “to the islands” to pristine nature, freedom from the city and its social dictate. But downshifters, especially in the case of a spontaneous departure, are reluctant to meet new challenges and social roles, the need to earn money, to build international communication and overcome the language barrier.

A rational downshifting strategy means serious preparation. Departure is prepared for at least a year. The map and conditions of resettlement are being studied, because there are plenty of actual countries and locations. Except Goa, these are the villages of Thailand, Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Morocco and, of course, Bali, which has become especially trendy after the bestseller “Eat, Pray, Love” Liz Gilbert. Downshifters find places far from the bustle of cities in Europe (Monte Isola, Torcello in Italy), and in the USA (Slay City), Australia, New Zealand. In Ukraine, in this sense, the Carpathians hold the championship.

A conscious downshifter understands that for a radical move and a comfortable unhurried life, it is desirable to have basic capital, your own car, knowledge of local languages, and most importantly, to have psychological stability and plasticity. The escape from the city can be temporary or periodic. This is not about traditional travels that give energy and new impressions, but about ecotourism. In search of places free from anthropogenic impact, the townspeople with the whole family settle for vacations in clean natural areas, in villages, on farms, and hamlets. Such recreation is also beneficial to the host. A rest from the city, its abundance and total consumerism contributes to the psychological and physical recovery of the city dweller.

The highest form of conscious downshifting can be considered the path of a guru – a seeker of truth and his special place on Earth, who has deep knowledge of religion, philosophy, history, the laws of physical and spiritual

life, and sometimes even superpowers. Having achieved inner peace and fullness of life, mental and physical health, harmony with people and nature, such a person consciously chooses places on the planet remote from urban civilization.

But for comprehensive personal development, it is not at all necessary to leave the city forever. It is also possible to achieve enlightenment in a metropolis, finding similar locations, “third places” and people who inspire development and creativity. After all, it’s not in vain that they say: you can’t get away from yourself. Therefore, sometimes not so much a “change of scenery” as a deep inner work to create meanings can lead to the harmony of physical, mental and spiritual potentials. Perhaps the current global lockdown on coronavirus is one of the most difficult, but also paradoxically effective ways to know yourself.

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