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The article deals with the discourse of semi-peripherality, which had a significant impact on the urban culture of St. Petersburg-Petrograd-Leningrad generally and on the construction of urban infrastructure, such as the sewerage system, in particular. Prior to the revolution, the sewerage project had been discussed for more than forty years, but construction was not completed until the rule of Stalin. The notion of semi-periphery complements the well-known term of backwardness, and also contributes to the discussion of the "centre-periphery" dichotomy in the history of urban infrastructure in Eastern Europe.

1. Introduction

Cleaning and sanitizing cities were, without doubt, the most pressing urbanization problems in major industrial centers across the world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The beginning of the "water revolution" occurred at different times in different countries and, as a rule, the concept does not refer to a whole country, but to the experience of individual large cities.[1] The pioneers, as is well known, were London, Paris, and Hamburg, while other cities in Germany, Austria, Italy, and Russia, primarily its capital St. Petersburg, lagged behind.[2]

This article is not about the construction of water supply and sewerage in St. Petersburg, but rather about non-technical factors that had an impact on the development of urban infrastructure, in particular the discourse of semi-peripherality. This discourse is very close to the concept of backwardness, but introduces additional dimensions to it. The concept of backwardness in Russia in the nineteenth century, relative to England, France and Germany, has often

1 Matthew Gandy, The Fabric of Space. Water, Modernity, and the Urban Imagination, London 2014, p. 9, 14.

2 James H. Bater, St. Petersburg. Industrialization and Change. London 1976, p. 268; Friedrich Lenger, Metropolen der Moderne. Eine europäische Stadtgeschichte seit 1850, München 2014, p. 50-51, 57-58; Clemens Zimmermann, Die Zeit der Metropolen. Urbanisierung und Großstadtentwicklung, Frankfurt am Main 1996, p. 18 f.

been discussed in relation to urban infrastructure.[3] Great hopes for change in Russian society were placed, for example, in the construction of railways[4] and urban infrastructure in order to reduce this perceived "distance".[5] In pre-revolutionary and Soviet times, scientific and technical achievements were often transferred from European countries.[6]

The problems of cleansing Moscow and St. Petersburg and building urban infrastructure have been frequently attributed to backwardness. However, recent studies of successful early infrastructure projects in Eastern Europe have cast doubt on the validity of this assumption. Indeed, world leaders in engineering and architecture worked in Lviv, Warsaw, Moscow and many other cities – first of all, William Lindley. Accordingly, the dichotomy of "centre-peri-

3 Yanny Kotsonis, Making Peasants Backward. Agricultural Cooperatives and the Agrarian Question in Russia 1861–1914, London 1999, p. 1-8; Dietmar Neutatz, Träume und Alpträume. Eine Geschichte Russlands im 20. Jahrhundert, München 2013, p. 25; Anna Mazanik, Sanitation, Urban Environment and the Politics of Public Health in Late Imperial Moscow, Budapest 2015, p. 6, 60-62, 141, 192.

4 Roland Cvetkovsky, Modernisierung durch Beschleunigung. Raum und Mobilität im Zarenreich, Frankfurt am Main 2006, p. 132-155; Walter Sperling, Der Aufbruch in die Provinz. Die Eisenbahn und die Neuordnung der Räume im Zarenreich, Frankfurt am Main 2011, p. 60-147; Olga Malinova-Tziafeta, Iz goroda na daču. Sociokul'turnye faktory osvoenija dačnogo prostranstva vokrug Peterburga (1860-1914), St. Petersburg 2013, p. 239-243; Frithjof B. Schenk, Russlands Fahrt in die Moderne. Mobilität und sozialer Raum im Eisenbahnzeitalter, Stuttgart 2014, p. 189-212.

5 Patricia Herlihy, Odessa. A History 1794-1914, Cambridge 1987, p. 151-153; Robert W. Thurston, Liberal City, Conservative State. Moscow and Russia's Urban Crisis 1906-1914, New York/Oxford 1987, p. 9-11; Daniel R. Brower, The Russian City between Tradition and Modernity 1850–1900, Berkeley et al. 1990, p. 92-139, especially 125-138; Vladimir N. Ginev, Die Tätigkeit der Moskauer Stadtduma im Spiegel zweier Moskauer Tageszeitungen 1890-1905, in: Guido Hausmann (ed.): Gesellschaft als lokale Veranstaltung: Selbstverwaltung, Assoziierung und Geselligkeit in den Städten des ausgehenden Zarenreiches, Göttingen 2002, p. 236-240; Kirsten Bönker, Jenseits der Metropolen. Öffentlichkeit und Lokalpolitik im Gouvernement Saratov, 1890-1914. Böhlau, Köln/Weimar/Wien 2010, p. 228-230; Mazanik, Sanitation, p. 6.

6 Martin Lutz, Siemens im Sowjetgeschäft. Eine Institutionengeschichte der deutsch-sowjetischen Beziehungen 1917-1933, Stuttgart 2011; Alexei Miller/Martin Aust/Ricarda Vulpius (eds.), Imperium inter pares: Rol' transferov v istorii rossijskoy imperii, 1700-1917, Moscow 2010; Marjatta Hietala, Transfer of German and Scandinavian Administrative Knowledge. Examples from Helsinki and the Association of Finnish Cities, 1870-1939, in: Nico Randeraad (ed.), Formation and Transfer städtischen Verwaltungswissens, Baden-Baden 2003, p. 109-130; id., Finnische Wissenschaftler in Deutschland 1860-1950. Allgemeine Bemerkungen mit besonderer Berücksichtigung medizinischer Kontakte, in: Edgar Hösch/Jorma Kalela/Hermann Beyer-Thoma (eds.), Deutschland und Finnland im 20. Jahrhundert, Wiesbaden 1999, p. 373-394.

phery" is not entirely appropriate.[7] However, both this dichotomy and the very concept of backwardness remain relevant in cases of failure, as in St. Petersburg. But, as was noted by Dietmar Neutatz, during the last decades, the concept has often been used by historians without careful consideration.[8] Yanni Kotsonis indicated that the notion of Russian backwardness relative to Europe had so firmly entered the mindset of the educated public in the pre-revolutionary period that almost every phenomenon would tend to be explained in these terms.[9]

The proposed concept of semi-peripherality defines the general term "backwardness" more precisely. First, this is not about the actual transfer of knowledge and technology necessary for the construction of water infrastructure, but rather about ideas and feelings, about the subjective attitude of Russian urban society towards Western science and technology, and their position in relation to some ideal world that was usually associated with European countries. The main features of semi-peripherality can be described as: 1. Distinct subjectivity. 2. The well-established Eurocentrism of St. Petersburg society, which can be understood, among other things, in terms of "purity and danger" proposed by Mary Douglas[10], i.e., strength and progress are embodied in the concept of "Europeanness", while danger transcends from the opposition to this idea. This was often expressed in the conformity or inconsistency of urban infrastructure projects with Russian ideas about Europeanness. 3. The instrumentalization of Russian Eurocentrism by appealing to shame as a means of social discipline. 4. The curtailment of discussions of semi-peripherality in the Soviet period.

In historical literature, there is an obvious imbalance in the studies about municipal services in Russia: The pre-revolutionary period has been studied much more fully than the Soviet period. Before 1917, city authorities were concerned with the problem of building a civil society in Russia. Criticizing the current political system could be "hidden" or embedded in discussions about public utilities in Eastern European cities.[11] The October Revolution crushed any

7 Eszter Gantner/Heidi Hein-Kircher/Oliver Hochadel, Backward and Peripheral? Emerging Cities in Eastern Europe. Introduction, in: Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung 67:4, 2018, p. 475-484; Eszter Gantner/Heidi Hein-Kircher/Oliver Hochadel, Interurban Knowledge Exchange in Southern and Eastern Europe, 1870–1950, New York/London 2021.

8 Neutatz, Träume und Alpträume, p. 12.

9 Kotsonis, p. 1-8.

10 Mary Douglas, Reinheit und Gefährdung. Eine Studie zu Vorstellungen von Verunreinigung und Tabu, Berlin 1985.

11 Manfred Späth, Wasserleitung und Kanalisation in Großstädten. Ein Beispiel der Organisation Technischen Wandels im Vorrevolutionären Russland, Berlin 1978, p. 342-360; Valerija Nardova, Gorodskoe samoupravlenie v Rossii v 60-načale 90h godov XIX veka, Le-

civil initiatives, and the subsequent municipal services of Leningrad were not of much interest to historians. Like socialist modernity, it requires further research despite important new studies published over the past decades.[12] Even though the history of water infrastructure in the USSR is represented in the literature, the focus has been on technological problems.[13]

2. Semi-peripherality in the context of the St. Petersburg culture

In introducing the concept of semi-peripherality into urban infrastructure history, I draw on sociologist Manuela Boatcă's idea of the semi-periphery. According to Boatcă, the term describes the development of modernity within the European Union of today: the position occupied by Portugal, Spain, and Eastern Europe relative to the "heart of Europe" (Great Britain, France, and Germany).[14] In focusing on the heterogeneity of Europe in terms of economies and infra-

ningrad 1984; id., Samoderžavie i gorodskie dumy v konce XIX—načale XX vekov, St. Petersburg 1994; Michael F. Hamm, Continuity and Change in Late Imperial Kiev, in: id. (ed.), The City in Late Imperial Russia, Bloomington 1986, p. 90 f.; Frederick W. Skinner, Odessa, and the problem of urban modernisation, in: Hamm, p. 218 f.; Anders Henriksson, Riga Growth, Conflict, and the Limitations of Good Government, 1850-1914, in: Hamm, p. 186; Stephen D. Corrsin, Poles and Jews in a Conquered City, in: Hamm, p. 138; Thurston; Herlihy, p. 237-239; Brower; Karl Schlögel, Jenseits des Grossen Oktober. Das Laboratorium der Moderne. Petersburg 1909-1921, Berlin 1988, p. 25-42; Lutz Häfner, Gesellschaft als lokale Veranstaltung. Die Wolgastädte Kasan und Saratov (1870-1914), Köln et al. 2004, p. 79 f.; Bönker, p. 244-246; Boris B. Dubencov/Valerija A. Nardova (eds.), Peterburgskaja gorodskaja duma, 1846–1918, Sankt Petersburg 2005; Ewa Bérard, Pétersbourg imperial. Nicolas II, la ville, les arts, Paris 2012, p. 139-179; Mazanik, Sanitation, p. 1-6, 48; id., Learning from Smaller Cities, Moscow in the International Urban Networks, 1870–1910, in: Gantner/Hein-Kircher/Hochadel, p. 121; Jan Behrends/Martin Kohlrausch, An Introduction, in: Behrends et al. (eds.), Races to Modernism. Metropolitan Aspirations in Eastern Europe, 1890-1940, Budapest/New York 2014, p. 1-19; Charlotte E. Henze, Disease, Health Care and Government in Late Imperial Russia. Life and Death on the Volga 1823-1914, Abingdon/New York 2011; Heidi Hein-Kircher, Lembergs "polnischen Charakter" sichern. Kommunalpolitik in einer multiethnischen Stadt der Habsburgermonarchie zwischen 1861/62 und 1914, Stuttgart 2020, p. 13-18.

12 Marie-Janine Calic/Dietmar Neutatz/Julia Obertreis, The Crisis of Socialist Modernism, in: Marie-Janine Calic et al. (eds.), The Crisis of Socialist Modernism. The Soviet Union and Yugoslavia in the 1970s, Göttingen 2011, p. 7-27.

13 K.I. Krasnoborodko et al., The Development of Water Supply and Sewerage Systems in St. Petersburg, in: European Water Management 2:4, 1999, p. 51-61; Vladimir Dmitriev, Istorija razvitija vodosnabženija i kanalizacii Sankt-Peterburga, St. Peterburg 2002; id. et al., Vodosnabženie i kanalizacija Leningrada v period Velikoj Otechestvennoj vojny 1941-1945, St. Petersburg 2005.

14 Manuela Boatcă, Multiple Europas und die interne Politik der Differenz, in: id./Willfried Spohn (eds.), Globale, multiple und postkoloniale Modernen, München 2010, p. 347-351.

structure models, Boatcă invites the reader into a direct and clear conversation about the Eurocentrism of modernity. The term is also used in a slightly different sense. For example, geographer Martin Müller frames the semi-alterity of the modern political and economic systems of Eastern European countries in relation to the Global North, the Global South and the less defined Global East in this way.[15] Anthropologist Ivan Kalmar uses semi-peripherality to describe dismissive attitudes towards "Eastern Europeans" as a form of racism.[16]

Even though Putin's Russia of today is not included in the model that Boatcă offers, the Russian Empire, and especially St. Petersburg as the capital, can still nominally be considered part of the semi-periphery of Europe in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In economic terms, and in terms of science and technology, the country lagged behind, although politically it played a leading role in Europe as an important diplomatic partner. A particular role was played by the Europeanized elite of the country.[17] Considering the sources of semi-peripherality in Russia, one can claim that it was typical of the St. Petersburg aristocracy to a certain degree, even during the reign of Peter the Great. However, a powerful new impulse came with the Great Reforms (1860-70s). Russia moved "closer" to Europe through the construction of railways, which intensified the exchange of goods, technology, and ideas. St. Petersburg was a special city in Russia, particularly because of its European character, and thus it needs to be considered separately from the rest of Russia.[18] The artist, memoirist, and art historian Alexandr Benois (1870-1960) remembered that in the St. Petersburg of the 1870-80s an "intense cult of foreignism" [19] reigned, though he could find no similar cult in any other European country. Enthusiasm for all things European often coincided with dissatisfaction over Russian equivalents. Later, in emigration, the same author noted that "there was much that was amusing, and much that was unfair, in this deference by the Russian people to the foreign" and in the way that foreigners' rapturous compliments about Russian life were not believed but taken as polite compliments.[20]

Russians, including the people of St. Petersburg, were attracted by the European ideals of culture, fashion and consumption, mainly from the major cities in the "heart" of Europe: Paris, London and Hamburg. Compared to these cities,

15 Martin Müller, In Search of the Global East. Thinking between North and South, in: Geopolitics 25:3, 2020, p. 734-755.

16 Ivan Kalmar, White but Not Quite. Central Europe's Illiberal Revolt, Bristol 2022.

17 Andreas Schönle et al. (eds.), The Europeanized Elite in Russia, 1762–1825. Public Role and Subjective Self, DeKalb 2016.

18 Bérard; Mark D. Steinberg, Petersburg Fin de Siècle, New Haven/London 2011, especially p. 2 f.

19 Alexandr N. Benua, Moi Vospominanija, Vol. 1, Sankt-Petersburg 1993, p. 414.

20 Ibid.

St. Petersburg was perceived as a semi-peripheral city. However, relative to Russian provinces, the city was already playing the role of a center of enlightenment, a "window on Europe".[21] However, on the urban level, a pronounced division was visible between the European city center and the poor outskirts of St. Petersburg.[22] From this perspective smaller Russian cities were thought of as the periphery of Europe or even as its colonies, such as towns in Siberia and Central Asia.[23]

Following Boatcă, I understand semi-peripherality as the subjective characterization of a city, social group, or phenomenon that was in-between: not in the center and at the same time not on the periphery of Europeanness. A good example of this is the eastern part of Poland that was a part of the Russian Empire until 1915. There, semi-peripherality was expressed not only through the primacy of European science, technology and political institutions, but even in the understanding of historical time, of temporality itself. Poland's desire to associate itself with Europe was obviously based on aversion and resistance towards imperialist Russia.[24]

3. Semi-peripherality and municipal services in pre-revolutionary St. Petersburg

The need for water infrastructure, including water supply and sewage systems, was discussed in Russia as early as the 1830s, but it was only actively pursued during the period of the Great Reforms (1860-70s).[25] *Cholera asiatica* epidemics initially spread from Russia to Europe. The first outbreaks occurred in Moscow in 1830, and St. Petersburg in 1831. However, the scientific and municipal practices to combat cholera spread in the opposite direction from Europe to Russia. At the same time, the emergence of elected bodies of local self-government (1864 in rural areas and 1870 in cities) played a crucial role here. The cholera epidemics of the nineteenth century provoked heated public debate, but did not directly lead to any infrastructure building.[26] Indeed, the elected City par-

21 Olga Ageeva, „Veličajšij i slavnejšij bolee vsech gradov v svete" – grad svjatogo Petra, Sankt Petersburg 1999, p. 60-62, 205 f.

22 Hans-Christian Petersen, An den Rändern der Stadt? Soziale Räume der Armen in St. Petersburg (1850-1914), Wien/Köln/Weimar 2019, especially p. 23-26.

23 Alexander Morrison, Metropole, Colony, and Imperial Citizenship in the Russian Empire, in: Kritika. Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History 13:2, 2012, p. 327-364, especially p. 341f.

24 Clara M. Frysztacka, Zeit-Schriften der Moderne. Zeitkonstruktion und temporale Selbstverortung in der polnischen Presse (1880-1914), Munich 2020.

25 Zimmermann, p. 18-19.

26 James H. Bater, Modernisation and Public Health in St. Petersburg, 1890-1914, in: Forschungen zur Osteuropäischen Geschichte 3, 1985, p. 364-366; Malinova-Tziafeta, p. 120-

liament (*Gorodskaja Duma*) of St. Petersburg failed to resolve any of the mammoth tasks of modernizing the capital.[27] There are several reasons why imperial St. Petersburg earned notoriety as the filthiest European city.[28] James Bater lists the following key causes: the unfortunate topographic position of the city; the high cost of the project and the impossibility of covering the cost through a tax channeling funds to the City authorities. St. Petersburg was a city of civil servants and state agencies, all exempted from taxation. There was also an absence of civic spirit amongst the *Gorodskaja Duma* members.[29] However, analysis of the reports of Sewer Committees within the City authority shows that the members' subjective perceptions of European science and engineering played an important role. Although most did not have an engineering education, they had to interpret the conflicting opinions of various Russian inventors, as well as city deputies' reports of their visits to inspect sewers in cities across Europe, their visits to World Exhibitions, et cetera.[30] In addition, the city authorities' fear of fundamentally new technological projects and the risks associated with them played an important role. The discussion of the sewage project in the city government moved into a long phase of paralyzing perfectionism.[31] The discourse of semi-peripherality played a significant role in this endless procrastination.

The idea of "Europeanness" was a constructed ideal used as a rhetorical tool in debates and as a hidden reproach for imperfection and inertia. Conflicting ideas regarding the improvement of city infrastructure also became the subject of public debate in newspapers and magazines.[32] Journalists and public figures were delighted to go along with this, as they assumed that only the public at large could clean up St. Petersburg and turn it into a true European city.[33] What exactly was to be understood by "true Europeanness" remained, however, unclear. Anyway, hopes for a dignified European future infrastructure in pre-revolutionary Moscow were expressed not only by Westernists, but also by inveterate Slavophiles.[34] Europeanism and overcoming backwardness in St. Peters-

127, 150-156.

27 Bater, St. Petersburg, p. 342-353; Dubencov/Nardova, p. 61, 199, 226, 240, 252.

28 Annegret Bautz, Sozialpolitik statt Wohltätigkeit. Der Konzeptionswandel städtischer Fürsorge in St. Petersburg von 1892 bis 1914, Wiesbaden 2007, p. 103 f.

29 Bater, St. Petersburg, p. 360-367.

30 Domontovič, p. 86-88, 100-109, 158-159.

31 Malinova-Tziafeta, p. 142-156.

32 Cf. Steinberg, p. 69-75; Maria Pirogovskaya, Miazmy, simptomy, uliki: zapachi meždu medicinoj I moral´ju v russkoj kul´ture vtoroj poloviny XIX veka, St. Petersburg 2018, p. 109-125.

33 D. M., Peterburg – evropejskij li gorod?, in: Delo 1, 1877, Čast' 16., p. 53-70.

34 Mazanik, Sanitation, p. 60-61.

burg and Moscow were equated with the public good and embodied in municipalization.[35] The Russian public hoped for improvement of all Russian life in general, from progress in public health to establishing liberal freedoms and changes in the political life of the state.[36]

However, no concrete examples of such "Europeanness" were given. It is obvious that Russian society wanted to keep up with progress, i.e., "Europeanness", even in those cases where the European examples were absent, not positive, or technologically unfeasible, as in St. Petersburg. In his work on Westernists in Russia, Benjamin Beuerle indicated that excitement for Western, or European things was so widespread that the very concept of westernism appears to have become depersonalized and not based on reality. Cutting-edge European experience was held up as a standard, even when there was absolutely no justification for this. For example, when legal theorists insisted on banning capital punishment in Russia, they presented Europe as an example, although at that time the death penalty was still widely practiced in European countries.[37]

References to the semi-peripherality of St. Petersburg were common in debates about municipal problems, especially because of the rich symbolism associated with pollution. According to Mary Douglas, the purity-danger dichotomy separated the socially acceptable from the rejected not only symbolically, but also appealed to a sense of shame in cases of violation of the established order.[38] Denunciatory publications in newspapers had traditionally been used to inflict public shame all over the world as a social discipline instrument in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[39] Only in this way could the experts, mostly doctors and engineers, influence the decisions of the St. Petersburg City authority, which was a closed club for wealthy homeowners.[40]

The media of St. Petersburg were actively pushing for the construction of a European type of sewerage project, which was at the same time criticized[41] because it was of little use in the city. In 1874, the City authority members found

35 D. M.; Grigorij Archangel`skij, Peterburg I ego sredstva k ochraneniju I vosstanovleniju zdorovja žitelej, in: Zdorov`e 1, 1874, p. 5-11; Mazanik, Learning from Smaller Cities, p. 122.

36 Behrends/Kohlrausch, p. 1-19.

37 Benjamin Beuerle, Russlands Westen. Westorientierung und Reformgesetzgebung im ausgehenden Zarenreich, 1905-1917, Wiesbaden 2016, p. 273-307.

38 Douglas, p. 73.

39 Everett Cherrington Hughes (ed.), Robert Ezra Park. Society, Collective Behavior, News and Opinion, Sociology and Modern Society, Glencoe 1955, p. 93.

40 Malinova-Tziafeta, p. 120-141.

41 Max von Pettenkofer, Kanalizacija i vyvoz nečistot. Populjarnye lekzii, Moscow 1877, p. 24 f., 96-98, 104.

themselves caught up in a public debate between engineers and the public health doctors about the design of the system. The City authority was seriously considering to realize the cheaper option of a sewage extraction system designed by the engineer A. F. Burov (a redesign of the work of Dutch engineer Charles T. Liernur), while doctors and the public at large demanded construction according to designs adapted for St. Petersburg from the ideas of the English engineer William Lindley.[42] The sewage extraction and transportation system was reminiscent of traditional village toilets, where the material had to be physically removed, transported, and dumped, with the danger that the owners and digging workers could become infected. Given such a hazard, hygienists categorically rejected the approach.[43] However, Lindley's system was far from ideal: the design required massive investment, while the environmental conditions of the Neva Bay and the Gulf of Finland did not allow ideal and safe implementation of neither the Lindley sewage model nor any other European one.

The key problem was the disposal of waste. According to hygienists, a modern collector sewer system was adequate because it removed waste from the city entirely.[44] But disinfection and powerful filters did not yet exist. Where could the city's waste be taken? St. Petersburg stood in the delta of the Neva River as if in the bottom of a dish, dispersed on numerous islands. This meant that it was not considered a good option to take feces to the fields on the outskirts of the city and further process them into fertilizer, as Edwin Chadwick had suggested for English cities.[45] The idea was successfully implemented by engineer James Hobrecht in the construction of the Berlin sewers (1887-1909).[46] But if implemented in St. Petersburg, the pipes would have had to be laid at a sufficient depth – one and a half meters in the city center – rising up to ten meters at the edge of the city.[47]

The St. Petersburg city authorities also discussed the discharge of sewage into water bodies, as had been done in London and Paris, as well as in Frank-

42 A. Michajlov, Ozdorovlenie gorodov, in: Delo 4, 1874, p. 90-115. I. Zarubin, Assenizacija Peterburga, in: Peterburgskij listok, 25.5.1875.

43 Grigorij Archangel'skij et al., Po povodu opytov pnevmatičeskoj očistki goroda po sisteme Lirnura, in: Zdorov'e 16, 1875, p. 341-343.

44 Fjodor Erisman, Različnye sposoby udalenija nečistot po otnošeniju k ozdorovleniju gorodov, St. Petersburg 1875, p. 36, 50 f.

45 Christopher Hamlin, Public Health and Social Justice in the Age of Chadwick. Britain 1800–1854, Cambridge 1998, p. 163-164.

46 Siegfried Hagen, Die Berliner Rieselfelder, ihre Einrichtung und volkswirtschaftliche Bedeutung, besonders von den landwirtschaftlichen Standpunkten aus, Berlin 1903.

47 Grigorij A. Soloduchin, Vozmožna li sistema splavnoj kanalizacii po udaleniju gorodskich nečistot v Peterburge?, Sankt Petersburg 1893.

furt am Main and other European cities.[48] But allowing sewage discharge into small rivers and channels on each island would have meant concentrating waste near residential areas. Laying conduits underneath so many riverbeds was at that time considered to be a literal pipe dream that was not feasible financially.[49] The most logical approach was to arrange the release of waste into the Neva delta, where the river flows into the Gulf of Finland. However, this would have contaminated the shallow waters of the southern shore, including the magnificent Imperial residences of Peterhof, Strel`na and Oranienbaum. Moreover, frequent seasonal flooding would have carried the waste back into the city, with the threat of an environmental catastrophe.[50]

Clearly, the alternative would have been to seek a fundamentally new solution to the problem. But rejecting all progressive European experiences was something that the public bristled at. Nevertheless, both the members of the City authority (1874)[51] and engineers Fedorov and Nechaev (1900)[52] did suggest rejecting the construction of a sewer system. Both the Duma members and Fedorov referred to the fact that the removal of waste had not been carried out in any city without serious adverse consequences due to the contamination of the locations where city waste was eventually ejected.[53] An alternative proposal made by Fedorov and other engineers was to overhaul the old system of cesspits. These were to be rebuilt using granite slabs laid to tightly fit together, thus preventing the waste from contaminating residential areas. The pits had to be regularly and frequently cleaned out, for which purpose the traditional sanitary brigade equipment had to be meticulously repaired.[54] The author of this proposal, Fedorov, demonstrated, above all, that the sewer system was not

48 K. Grinberg, O kanalizacii Peterburga, St. Petersburg 1885, p. 13-14; A. Merc, Osadočnye bassejny splavnoj sistemy kanalizacii goroda Frankfurta-na-Majne i kanalizacija goroda Danciga. Iz otčeta po poezdke za granicu v 1887 godu, St. Petersburg 1889, p. 3-10.

49 Velichov, Raznye svedenija. K voprosu o kanalizacii Sankt-Peterburga, in: Gorodskoe delo, 1909, No. 20, p. 1051-1056.

50 Erisman, p. 88.

51 Ivan Domontovič, Zapiska po proektam ob otvode gorodskich nečistot, sostavlennaja predsedatelem komissii po ustrojstvu v Sankt-Peterburge mostovych i trub dlja otvoda nečistot, St. Petersburg 1874, p. 118, 334-335.

52 Evgenij Fedorov, Po povodu kanalizacii Sankt-Peterburga. Dve reči v stroitel'nom otdele imperatorskogo russkogo techničeskogo obščestva, St. Petersburg 1900, p. 3-24; Nikolaj Nečaev, Preuveličennoe značenie kanalizacii, in: Dve reči v stroitel'nom otdele imperatorskogo russkogo techničeskogo obščestva, St. Petersburg 1900, p. 3-8.

53 Domontovič, p. 188-189, 192-193, 195, 199; Fedorov, p. 3-24; Nečaev, p. 3-8.

54 K. Marčenko, O nepronicaemych vygrebach. Soobščenie v Peterburgskom obščestve architektorov v marte 1887, St. Petersburg 1887, p. 1-5; A. Sjunnerberg, Proekt ustrojstva domovych vygrebnych jam iz granita pod cementom dlja goroda Peterburga, St. Petersburg 1884.

a panacea in sanitary science. Without rejecting the hygiene rules in their entirety, he simply proposed shifting focus from cleaning the urban space to improving the quality of workers' lives: better housing[55] and food supply, also reinforcing anti-alcohol propaganda. These proposals did not garner support, and at one meeting of the Russian Technical Society, Fedorov was accused of preaching "scientific heresy".[56] Hence, according to Douglas, the alternative proposal was discussed in terms of dangerous apostasy[57], and its authors were declared enemies of progress, while progress itself was to follow Europeanness, in other words, the infrastructure standards set by the leading cities.

4. Semi-peripherality and political debates of the early twentieth century

Karl Schlögel described the paradox between the splendor of the imperial European capital and the lack of sewerage as "the tragical Imperial".[58] Contemporary writers also compared St. Petersburg unfavorably with cities in other countries. Many years of discussion within the authorities and in the press had little impact on the resolution of the problem itself, but there was a major impact on the public and political life of the Empire.[59] When a multi-party parliament was finally set up in Russia after the Revolution of 1905 (*Gosudarstvennaja Duma*), the question of cleaning the city was used in the political stand-off between Petr Stolypin and opposition parliamentarians. After the massive cholera epidemic of 1908-1909, the parliamentary opposition and society in general demanded from Petr Stolypin's government a revision of the law on city management (the *Gorodovoe položenie* of 1892) to grant the city management bodies more power and greater financial muscle.[60] The *Gorodskoe Delo* journal (1909-1918), which was one of the mouthpieces of the party of constitutional democrats, delivered the most cutting criticism of municipal utilities management in St. Petersburg. Again, appeals to the positive experience of Europe take center stage. For example, the journal quotes Swedish hygienist doctors: "... on the banks of the Neva a horrific contamination hotspot has formed, and the capital of the great northern Empire has suddenly begun scattering the

55 Vgl. Petersen, p. 169-280.
56 Fedorov, p. 3-4, 24.
57 Douglas, 136, 141 f.
58 Schlögel, p. 25-66.
59 Malinova-Tziafeta, p. 127-139.
60 Nikolaj Rostovcev, Zabytyj vopros, in: Gorodskoe delo, 1909, No 2., p. 57-59; G. Fal'bork, G. Prinuditel'noe ozdorovlenie g. Peterburga, in: Gorodskoe delo, 1909, No 5, p. 181-187; M. Gran, Peterburg i cholera, in: Gorodskoe delo, 1909, No 5, p. 187-193; Proekt zakona o kanalizacii Peterburga, in: Gorodskoe delo, 1909, No. 14, p. 709-710; Velichov, p. 1051-1061.

sparks of a dangerous epidemic fire".[61] The sanitary problem was also seen as a negative political symbol. The authors pointed to Russia's international responsibility for the harm inflicted also on the annexed territories of Ingria, Poland, and Finland, where many people barely tolerated Russian patronage.

Petr Stolypin managed to delegitimize the opposition's arguments by turning their own weapons against them. He acknowledged that the absence of a sewage system was dangerous for the lives of the urban poor[62], and that he felt "shame for his homeland".[63] He also mentioned the construction of sewers serving 624 German towns and cities comparing it with 50 cities in Russia.[64] In this way, the references to the semi-peripherality of St. Petersburg were used as a political tool and blamed the city's own management for its inability even to choose an appropriate sewage system project. The result was a new draft law in 1909 to transfer the entire sewer issue to a government committee, i.e. to state civil servants. However, the project did not get off the ground, and in many ways, this was due to Russia's entry into the First World War.[65]

5. Semi-peripherality and political competition between the cities of the Russian Empire

There was political competition between cities in the Russian Empire to act as the most European. The construction of sewers and water supply in Warsaw[66] was discussed in the Polish press as one more proof of their primacy and progressiveness, striving towards Europe and the modernity of Poland.[67] The water network in St. Petersburg (1858) very soon required thorough reorganization and became a source of competition between St. Petersburg and Warsaw. First, the people of the city were furnished with completely unfiltered water. The City authority went to court to force the water supply companies to filter the

61 Z. Frenkel', Ozdorovlenie gorodov, polja orošenija i biologičeskaja očistka, in: Gorodskoe delo, 1909, No. 20, p. 1054.

62 Cf. Petersen, p. 58.

63 Petr A. Stolypin, Reč' o neobchodimosti izdanija novogo ėkstrennogo zakona v celjach ozdorovlenija stolicy, proiznesennaja v Gosudarstvennoj Dume 11 janvarja 1911 g., in: Jurij G. Felštinskij (ed.), Nam nužna velikaja Rossija. Polnoe sobranie rečej v Gosudarstvennoj Dume i Gosudarstvennom Sovete (1906–1911), Moscow 1991, p. 317, 322 f.

64 Ibid., p. 231.

65 Dubencov/Nardova, p. 182-184.

66 Malte Rolf, Imperiale Herrschaft im Weichselland. Das Königreich Polen im Russischen Imperium (1864-1915), Berlin 2015, p. 227-282.

67 Frysztacka, p. 9-11; 283-284, 296-297, 313; Anna Weronika Wendland, „Europa" zivilisiert den „Osten". Stadthygienische Interventionen, Wohnen und Konsum in Wilna und Lemberg 1900–1903, in: Alena Janatková/Hanna Kozińska-Witt (eds.), Wohnen in der Großstadt 1900-1939. Wohnsituation und Modernisierung im europäischen Vergleich, Stuttgart 2006, p. 271-296.

water, and soon bought out the city water network (1891-1893), although they had no choice but to rebuild the now-obsolete equipment.[68] General Sokrates Starynkiewicz, the legendary creator of the Warsaw sewer system, visited the stations of the St. Petersburg water system (1890) and recorded in his diary a strange inconsistency between the different machines and components of the system: "It is as if they were each purchased by happenstance".[69]

Historians have considered the construction of the Warsaw sewer system in the context of complex relations between Tsarist Poland and Russian Imperial power.[70] The city authorities of St. Petersburg responded to the comparison unenthusiastically, preferring to focus on the shortcomings of the Warsaw project. In a report by the City authority (1908) it is stated that waste leaving the collector formed a brown strip in the river Vistula of 4-5 *sažens* (8,52 – 10,65 m) in width, which stood out against the otherwise light-coloured water. This stinking stream lost none of its color or odor for 20-25 versts (20,20 – 26,50 km), wholly contaminating the left bank. Such reporting even hints at the harmful "anti-Russian" aspect of the project, as it was the Warsaw garrison that was made to suffer by this Polish sewer system. Soldiers and officers serving in the Russian forces could no longer swim in the area, and the culture of visiting summer homes, or dachas, came to an end.[71] Such a viewpoint is unlikely to have been fully accepted as valid by the people of Warsaw themselves, as the sewer system there is a matter of local pride up to this day. In the work of Włodziemierz K. Pessel, the clear, ordered structure of the underground sewer tunnels is favorably compared to the more chaotic city above-ground.[72]

Thus, the semi-peripherality discourse, which was generally given clear expression in the pre-revolutionary society of St. Petersburg, also had a major influence on public discussions around the selection of a sewer design, sanitation and city water infrastructure. Obviously, the case of St. Petersburg cannot be included in the dichotomy of "center-periphery". However, the subjective inclination of the St. Petersburg public towards Europe allows us to speak of semi-peripherality. At the same time, "Europeanness" had become a constructed ideal, which did not always correspond to the real life of European cities. In discussions about municipal and sanitary problems, it was used as a

68 Dubencov/Nardova, p. 101 f.

69 Włodziemierz K. Pessel, Antropologia nieczystości. Studia z kultury sanitarnej Warszawy XIX i XX wieku, Warschau 2009, p. 92 f., 99.

70 Ibid.

71 Proekt zakona, p. 33 f.

72 Włodziemierz K. Pessel, A Postsocialist City that Looks Nice from Underneath. Paper at the Conference "Cities in the USSR and the Eastern Bloc – Urbanization, Ecology and the Municipal Economy (1917-1991)", University of Erlangen-Nuremberg, Germany, 20.-21.2.2020.

reliable tool of persuasion, including through the explicit or implicit use of the "purity-danger" dichotomy, and the feelings of shame and disgrace. Correlating with a positive context of progress and science as well as an ideally organized society, writers achieved different goals. They advertised their products, promoted the best (from their point of view) sewer design, criticized the shortcomings of the urban economy and the very way it was managed. Ultimately, the ideas of semi-peripherality in relation to the urban economy were used both in open political debates and in the smoldering hostility between Warsaw and St. Petersburg. This shows that public utilities and the construction of urban infrastructure in St. Petersburg, as in many other cases, became topics that made it possible to bypass censorship prohibitions and make a political statement. Comparison with European cities was used as a practical tool in social and political controversy, as in fact, the experts and the public had no other leverage to influence the city and central authorities to promote their ideas and projects.

6. Urban cleaning during the Soviet period (1918-1930s)

Regarding the organization and management of cleaning Petrograd/Leningrad, after the October Revolution of 1917 the semi-peripherality discourse underwent a significant change: One can say that it abated. The Stalin period is generally associated with a growth in Soviet patriotism and propaganda that rejected all things Western as well as numerous bans of ideological nature. However, in addition there were far-reaching changes in the structure through which city utilities were managed and, therefore, the way communication about shortcomings and failures in this field was framed.

The typical traits of semi-peripherality had become so firmly anchored in the discourse on the modernization of cities that the familiar call to match European development was used in the manifesto of Petrograd's Sewer and Roads Agency (1923). The author justified the need for urgent work in the city as follows: "In order for it to be possible not only to maintain the good organization of the city in the state it is in now, but for it also to be possible, in the shortest time, to ensure its appearance is appropriate for Western cities".[73] In the original, the underlined phrase is written in purple ink, over the top of typewritten text. The weakly typed letters, since overwritten with the above phrase by hand, include the word "Europe"[74], i.e. the much-desired "foreign lands" con-

[73] Central`nyj Gosudarstvennyj Archiv Sankt-Peterburga (CGA) f. 3167, Upravlenie kanalizaciej i mostovymi Otdela kommunal`nogo chozjajstva ispolkoma leningradskogo oblastnogo soveta (1918-1929 gg.), op. 1, d. 104, L. 1.

[74] Ibid.

tinued to be associated with European capitals. Again, the traditional semi-peripheral perspective of "Europeanness" does not refer to any real country or city. It is an abstract ideal without a physical example.

Being closely connected with political despotism,[75] overcoming backwardness was an important goal for the modernization of the economy and society in the Soviet Union. This was to be helped by the reform of the calendar, the development of the countryside, and industrial development.[76] The overcoming of industrial underdevelopment was openly declared in speeches by Stalin during the "war scare" of 1927 and political crisis of 1927-1928.[77] The period of relatively independent journalists and clashes of polar-opposite views had passed. In the new public communication about urban improvements, there was neither the interest nor the necessity to conduct detailed comparisons between East and West.

In the context of the formation of a fundamentally new system for managing the municipal services of the city, the discourse on semi-peripherality changed further. The Bolsheviks set out organizing the city's amenities soon after the revolution, in April 1918. The First World War and the civil war had brought chaos and a massive loss of population.[78] The English sci-fi writer Herbert Wells, who visited Russia and Petrograd in 1920, predicted that bringing the Northern Capital back to life was barely a possibility: "The city infrastructure was in a state of total collapse".[79] The new administrative system was initially organized through the City Amenities Department (the name changed later, for a long time, it was the Department of Municipal engineering, or OTKOMKhOZ for short). At first, the new organization brought together ten different subdivisions: sewers, urban construction, surveys, private construction,

[75] Manfred Hildermeier, Geschichte der Sowjetunion 1917-1991. Entstehung und Niedergang des ersten sozialistischen Staates, München 1998, p. 17-18, 36-37, 63.

[76] Heiko Haumann, Beginn der Planwirtschaft. Elektrifizierung, Wirtschaftsplanung und gesellschaftliche Entwicklung Sowjetrusslands 1917-1921, Düsseldorf 1974, p. 13, 113, 181; Tony Haywood, Modernising Lenin's Russia. Economic Reconstruction, Foreign Trade and the Railway, Cambridge et al. 1999, p. 3, 13 f., 63 f., 73; Stefan Plaggenborg, Experiment Moderne. Der sowjetische Weg, Frankfurt am Main 2006, p. 20, 25, 88, 124, 356; Berndt Bonwetsch, Der GULAG und die Frage des Völkermords, in: Jörg Baberowski/Dietrich Beyrau (eds.), Moderne Zeiten? Krieg, Revolution und Gewalt im 20. Jahrhundert, Bonn 2006, p. 137 f.; Stephen Kotkin, Magnetic Mountain. Stalinism as a Civilization, Berkeley et al. 1997, p. 4, 20, 29, 33, 69, 137, 176, 199.

[77] Iosif V. Stalin, Ob industrializacii strany i o pravom uklone v VKP(b), in: Pravda, 24.11.1928.

[78] Julia Obertreis, Tränen des Sozialismus. Wohnen in Leningrad zwischen Alltag und Utopie 1917-1937, Köln et al. 2004, p. 40-43.

[79] Herbert Wells, Russia in Shadows, London 1920, p. 18, 21 f.

firefighting, produce gardens, and so on.[80] Later, it became a complex and powerful organization. The decision to merge all these agencies under the authority of one single organization led to direct control by the authorities and to an expansion of the responsibilities of the Agency.

Prior to the revolution, a network of rainwater sewers, as well as a planned collector station, had fallen under the responsibility of at least six completely different agencies. Sewers were then understood to include all devices intended for removing waste and rainwater runoff.[81] But it was not always clear which body should be contacted when problems arose. After the revolution, all complaints and criticism were to be directed to just one institution. The sewer department was restructured to become the Petrograd Sewer Agency in June 1918, and a Design Bureau and Construction Bureau were formed. Here, specially selected and hired engineers began to finalize the project of a separate sewage system in 1919. Experts and city authorities no longer sought the ideal way to dispose of sewage. Instead, sewage was discharged into rivers until the 1970s and 2000s.

On the one hand, the agency "*Vodokanalizacija*" was under the direct control of OTKOMKhOZ, and then to the *Lensovet* Executive Committee, which was a permanent body attached to the city parliament. This was a powerful state expert and bureaucratic system whose designs were approved and financed by the state. These bodies informed citizens about events in the sector, although the actual choice of sewer system design, materials, et cetera was entirely delegated to the experts. All of this fundamentally changed the structure of public discussions about providing urban amenities. Private capital no longer existed, and that meant that the city authorities did not need to garner the support of independent investors. Private experts from outside OTKOMKhOZ could no longer impact planning and construction via the press or by publishing pamphlets on their own. Literature about the construction of sewer systems in the 1920s became the affair of specialists. They were never the personal, private opinions of one or other engineer about a problem which could be discussed in print without permission from state authorities.[82] In this way, Soviet engineers prepared a project and built a separate sewage system on Vasilievsky Island, the runoff was discharged into rivers. OTKOMKHOZ correspondence shows that

[80] Izvestija Petrogradskogo gorodskogo obščestvennogo upravlenija, 5.6. (23.5.) 1918, p. 3.

[81] CGA SPb f. 3167, op. 1, d. 1, l. 4-4 ob.

[82] D. S. Čerkes, Kanalizacija g. Char'kova. Doklad Vtoromu Vsesojuznomu vodoprovodnomu i sanitarno-techničeskomu s´ezdu v gorode Char'kove (1927), Moscow 1930; Vsevolod E. Timonov, Voda – istočnik žizni i smerti. Vodosnabženie i kanalizacija naseljonnych mest, Leningrad 1926.

the engineers did not consider that as ideal.[83] However, the issue was not discussed in the newspapers, that is, the public sphere had practically no influence on waste disposal issues.

On the other hand, participation by citizens was warmly welcomed by the authorities and the press, but only in the form of control "from below". Complaints about accidents, poor work or delays of street repairs became a major component of the work of OTKOMKhOZ, and now newspapers were not the only place where such complaints could be lodged. Any citizen could approach OTKOMKhOZ directly and, if we take the numerous submissions as a guide, people did not hesitate to take that initiative. The procedure for archiving material changed over time, and the number of cases in the Sewer and Roads Agency grew impressively after 1927-28. The state shifted to a planned economy at that time and started to actively prepare for war by instilling rigid labor discipline and secrecy. Starting in 1927, complaints and articles published in newspapers were carefully archived together with the results of inspections and resolutions by the Agency. The documents indicate the circumstances under which complaints were submitted, the organization that filed them, and the actions that could be taken by the Agency. Complaints could take the form of instructions voters directed to the deputies of the *Lensovet*. Notes have also been found, which were delivered at the Plenum to the head of OTKOMKhOZ in person.[84] Journalists working in the city's press directed intense attention to sewer and road works. Material was also published by the *Pravda* newspaper, although in many cases this could be followed by a court trial with accusations of sabotage brought against those responsible.[85]

Such instructions, penned by voters, emanated from all factories, plants, agencies and enterprises across the city. They varied greatly in nature, from general wishes to "rationally conduct repairs of sewers, roads and other improvements" to very specific requests, such as one from the residents and staff of the Labor Invalids Hostel: "Lay boardwalk right up to the hostel".[86] Some of these instructions took the form of exposés and outraged demands, such as one from the Skorokhod shoe factory: "When will the road surface at house number 113 on Meždunarodnyj Prospekt be finished, because the filth there is impassable".[87] Articles authored by journalists were longer, but also extremely specific. Here, the problem itself was described, the address, the persons re-

[83] CGA SPb f. 3167, op. 1, d. 321.
[84] CGA SPb F. 3167, op. 1, d. 269.
[85] Dietmar Neutatz, Die Moskauer Metro. Von den ersten Plänen bis zur Großbaustelle des Stalinismus 1897-1935, Köln et al. 2001, p. 59.
[86] CGA SPb F. 3167, op. 1, d. 269, l. 2 ob.
[87] CGA SPb F. 3167, op. 1, d. 269, l. 3 ob.

sponsible, the specific inconvenience or hazard presented for the population and the damage to the state. The Agency responded to every complaint, and sometimes cited a lack of funds, or the responsibility of a different body, but most often stated the timeline for repair work.[88] Regardless of the situation, the Agency was bound to give a written response in every case, following the Soviet principle of bureaucracy that a written communication cannot be ignored.[89] Of course, the simple fact of lodging a complaint did not guarantee an immediate correction of the problem, but the complainant was treated with respect.

We see here a clear contrast with pre-revolutionary period when publication in a newspaper was practically the only weapon in such a struggle. After the revolution, the function of complaints was retained, but it was now complemented by the direct participation of citizens in controlling urban improvements. Complaints in this case were a direct lever of action: They were followed by investigations, measures were taken and negligence by responsible persons could ultimately lead to sanctions, the very least of which was a reprimand. By 1936, the law was expanded to cover all areas of production and was applied universally, even entering the 'District Prosecutor's Handbook'.[90]

The Soviet system for issuing communications about urban infrastructure was shaped by the absence of private property and private economic interests. It would have been very difficult to use very specific complaints and demands about urban improvements in Soviet Petrograd/Leningrad in spontaneous, non-state and (implicitly) political communications. However, they could influence the correction of actual defects, accidents, and other incidences of urban disorder. City residents were drawn into the process, as important and respected figures, when very specific issues were discussed, although their opinions had little impact on plans or how infrastructure would develop in general. Excluding the concept of semi-peripherality from such a communication was not a challenge in any way. Following the revolution, communication about urban infrastructure and cleaning of the city shifted from the political realm to the strictly practical.

88 CGA SPb F. 3167, op. 1, d. 269, 71 L.

89 Vgl. Irina Levinskaya, Adam's Road, St. Petersburg 2003, p. 45.

90 O položenii del s razborom žalob trudjaščichsja. Postanovlenie CIK SSSR 14 dekabrja 1935 g. (SZ SSSR 1936 g. N31, st. 274); O rassmotrenii žalob trudjaščichsja. Postanovlenie Komissii sovetskogo kontrolja pri SNK SSSR, utv. SNK SSSR (SZ SSSR 1936 g. N31, st. 276), in: V. M. Bočkov (ed.), Prokuratura Sojuza SSR. Spravočnik rajonnogo prokurora, Moscow 1942, https://istmat.org/node/24219 [31.10.2022].

7. Conclusion

The concept of semi-peripherality provides a useful framework for analyzing the complexity of modernization in St. Petersburg/Petrograd/Leningrad. Before the revolution of 1917, references to the semi-peripheral were present in the discussion of many cultural issues in the urban community. They were widely used in public debates about the problems of public utilities and the construction of urban water infrastructure, and served as one of the tools for the public to put pressure on city authorities to build a suitable system. This pressure influenced the development of public utilities and also wider political debate. References to semi-peripherality became an effective instrument due to the appeal of the "purity-danger" dichotomy. Public shame, which included references to the success of European cities, was widely used because experts and the public had a weak influence on city authorities.

Immediately after the 1917 revolution, the issue of cleaning the city and the ideas of hygienists found new opportunities for development. They were expressed in rhetoric, in a new system of managing municipal utilities, the resolution of high-priority tasks to repair city infrastructure and finally to organize public control in the form of complaints and proposals regarding other urban management problems. The municipal utilities were organized in such a way that the attention of the city authorities and the public was focused on actual managerial tasks for urban modernization, while public discussions about designs (and, therefore, their political component) was squeezed out of the discourse as it fell under the total control of the state. On the one hand, the semi-peripherality discourse was curtailed after 1927. On the other hand, communication about the problems of urban life was transformed so much that it had supplanted the very need for a public comparison of Soviet and Western cities.