

# AIMS OF CITY DEVELOPMENT: A SOCIOLOGICAL VIEW

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*Abstract:* This article asks its readers to consider the main approaches defining the opportunity to apply such notions as social space, social quality, standard of living, identity and social activity to the sphere of municipal administration in city development.

*Keywords:* city development, social space, activity, identity, municipal administration.

Cities and the processes taking place within them are the focus of attention for scholars, experts, politicians, as well as the active part of the population. This focus is stipulated by speed, large scale and unpredictable changes happening in the world. These changes are initiated and located mostly in cities. A city is a complex, secluded, but not closed system (according to ideas of N. Luhmann, 1999) with its set of constituent parts, their relations and interactions, aims, administration and patterns of development.

Being a complex social system, a city acquires a systematic character on condition of developing its own system-constitutive complexity and purposefulness, i.e. developing parts of an internal medium that is not only a result of the external influence of the mega-system. Development of a city is considered to be dependent upon its ability to create, by means of administrative conditions, activating internal factors and parts of the system of both general and specific peculiarity. The complexity of the system is defined by its ability for self-development, self-administration, flexibility, and functional activity – a fact, which is considered to be a systematic condition of a higher order. The problem is seen in defining those conditions and the administrative means necessary to activate the internal factors and parts of a city as a complex social system that would, in turn, provide succession and consistency of development. Searching for new ideas while setting aims in developing a city and defining administrative methods for activating internal parts of the system is conceived to be preferable.

From the point of view of legislation, cities are municipal bodies, and administration is carried out within the system of

local self-administration that represents the public-and-political form of cities' function. Within this legal scheme, aims of city development are strictly fixed and standardized. At the present time, an economic-and-technocratic approach is the determinant one: it dictates the necessity of achieving a definite level of development in a city's economy. A step forward could be called a situation where some cities (for example, Saint Petersburg) aim at raising the standard of living of their citizens. Nevertheless, such aims characterize separate sides, some minor functions of both the population and the city as a whole. There is a certain demand for defining the aims of city development that would cover and reflect the array of relevant peculiarities of a city as a complex social system.

When defining the aims of city development, we remember a thesis of the early 20th century Russian philosopher, S. Frank, who said that "a man should always be considered to be an aim and never – to be a simple means; and we must respect any human personality" (Frank 1990: 69). For administrative aims such notions like *human potential* and *human capital* could be applied. Currently, these meaningful aims are supported by quantitative indices proving that "economic output from human capital exceeds the output from physical capital" (Kapelushnikov 2013: 28).

Focus on the formation of the qualitative characteristics of human potential and the capital in municipal administration allows us to obtain a reverse effect in all spheres of human activity. By qualitative characteristics of human potential we mean GDP, NDP, productivity of labour, adaptability to changes, quality of reflection, presentation of new knowledge, culture, high level of value of a human being, etc.

This is achieved via social infrastructure. The level and quality of services provided by the social infrastructure to the population indirectly characterizes the level and quality of human capital. But this does not speak to the role of the latter in city life; we do not have the answer regarding the level of its output, its participation in solving complex urban problems, to whether it is a non-material resource of development, and how it is possible to implement it in administrative work. At last, there is the problem of coincidence between the aim of development of an administrative system and the holders of human capital, how, where, and via what we can trace, join, and apply them in administrative work. Effectiveness and positive potential of human capital can be manifested via the opportunity to establish mutual relations, where an individual,

separate groups, communities are subjects of the co-administration of society's development together with the municipality and local bodies of self-administration under the terms of partnership and mutual responsibility.

Interrelation is considered to be an initial point of any administrative activity for the citizens and this can be gradually and logically implemented via the city's societies. A favourable/unfavourable condition and, simultaneously, a participant of the interrelation, is the social space of the city. Use of the systematic approach and A. Giddens' theory lets us say that social space is the concentration/dispersion of the social parts of a social system that are active, interrelated, localized according to their nature in a city (Giddens 2003).

Attention to the spatial approach is defined by the spatial structure of the social interrelation as the essential basis of the society described in works of social researchers such as A. Giddens, P. Bourdieu, representatives of actor-network theory such as B. Latour, J. Law, J. Urry, and others.

Space, naturally, is the platform (within the actor-network theory it is a network or torrent) that provides the effect of interrelation: inter-influence of both material parameters of the society's development and social parameters strictly defining localization of objects, subjects and their ties and relations.

The basic methodological foundation explaining the possibility and necessity of introducing mechanisms of interrelation among authorities, administration, and population as well as establishing social space and the use of its state and development in the municipal administration of city development is the theory of social action and the theory of structuralism by A. Giddens, R. Bhaskar (Giddens 2003; Bhaskar 1991).

A number of authors point at the confrontation of ideas within social structuralism and actor-network theory, but if we support the necessity of a complex social system, which is a city, we cannot avoid the interrelation of material and social parts of its space.

Physical space makes up the habitat of human beings; it can be felt, seen and measured; it has its own qualities and characteristics; it is visualized on the level of feelings, perception, and tactility. The basis of a city's physical space is formed by all those objects of the material world that surround man, which a citizen voluntarily or involuntarily encounters daily. A special place is given to architecture, urban planning, landscape, etc. which produce images, senses, and interrelations between them – "things act like people forming, together with

individuals, a heterogeneous network built in space and time” (Sanina 2010: 13) – acting as the symbolic edge of social space’s multidimensionality.

In this connection, while describing the space/image of a city, its perception and influence, it is useful to cite the actor-network theory by B. Latour in which subjects are not only individuals and groups but also objects of the material. “Interrelation always possesses temporary and space extension and that is why it is shared with non-humans. We should otherwise consider the word ‘inter’-*relation*. This expression means that in all spheres of the society action remains local, it always generates those who take part in it. But it also means that action should be shared with other types of actants spread in other space-and-time structures and generating different ontologies” (Latour 2007: 93).

Is the social space of a city structuralized? Yes, it is. Subjects/parts of the social space of a city are individuals/citizens and societies. It is necessary to reveal the state of the city’s society and its interests in order to find out how it influences the city’s development and also to coordinate these interests and processes in administrative work. There is a set of methods used to evaluate the state of the city’s society (level of social tension, level of comfortability, etc.), but they do not stipulate the evaluation of the level of citizens’ participation in achieving synchronized aims for development among all the subjects of administration. To solve this problem, we could apply the theory of social quality: “Social quality is defined as a level to which people are able to participate in the life of their society on terms contributing to the growth of the well-being and individual abilities [Walker, 2005]” (Bobkov, 2014). The primary advantage of this theory is its focus on creation, social justice, activity and solidarity of citizens: the possibility of their participation in co-administration while constructing the habitat of the city’s social space. The theory of social quality does not exclude implementation of the theory of standard of life which focuses on discovering social structures, their identity and differentiation.

While doing research on a city, it is not feasible to avoid questions of its identity. Setting up a city’s society happens via the identification of a human being with being a citizen, and this is a uniting feature that is a joint product of city’s activity and its citizens during their common existence. Simultaneously, creation of identity takes place together with processes actualizing expectations, counter demands to the society, need

for interrelation, setting up an individual system of coordinated priorities of interests via the equilibrium of the private and the public. Identity manifests itself via public relations, acts and mechanisms of which provide the unity of functional and symbolic units of social space (Orlova 2010: 110). Self-identification of man as citizen is a logical step towards the formation of a city's society. Within social identity we distinguish two approaches – essentialism and constructivism. In this article, we are not going to analyse them in detail. From the administrative point of view, identity is considered to be the answer to the challenge of “cultural imperialism”, spread by images of global culture that have great magnetic power and more and more acquire features of a political tool (Galkin 2005: 47). At the same time, identity does not oppose itself to global processes, and it is not an artificial attempt to be remote from them. In this condition, identity can exist and develop itself and its independence: it can define principles, mechanisms, and methods of the city's development. The social space of a city includes different types of spaces (cultural, ethnic, communicative, informative, etc.), and each type possesses its own features and characteristics. According to S.I. Nekrasov, “the foundation of differences of the discussed phenomena is made by a type of social regulators, tools of social order” (Nekrasov 2012: 26).

The basic social regulators include social norms that form the foundation of ties and relations, which set up the fiber of social space. The character and peculiarities of the ties and relations between its subjects/units are vital in understanding the notion of a city's social space. These ties are widely spread and verified, though they can present non-formalized forms, but it does not mean that they are less meaningful for the stable development of a social system of a city. It, *a priori*, stipulates that this general structural construction has tools of social regulation to which (within the framework of this article) we refer administrative tools and technologies. At the same time, we support the idea that apart from “social-and-administrative, legal, and moral regulators it is necessary to apply responsibility of every personality which is the major regulator” (Gelikh 2010: 51).

The main thesis regarding the system of administration says that in terms of uncertainty, multi-variant scenarios of development and complexity of adaptation processes and reflexion mechanisms; the modern system of administration is in no condition to meet the current challenges without the active

use of its citizens' potential. In other words, the role of the activity of separate individuals, groups and public movements as a resource for development is significant. The vitality of such an approach is explained by the increasing manifestation of activity of the population in all spheres, and the vector of this activity does not coincide with the advertised aims of development of the society. The under-evaluation of a population's activity by administrators leads to the situation where administration acts lack the ability to find solutions to the current problems and contradictions and therefore lack proper influence on society. All of these facts multiply the cost of resources necessary to overcome problems. At the present time, the practical work of municipal administration lacks the integrated approach needed to define the indices characterizing its vector of development taking into account the increasing influence of activity of the population in different types and forms. We can say that there are other indicators – level of social state, trust of authorities; they are a good and effective supplement to the ones mentioned above. Besides this, a whole spectrum of interests of active subjects of interrelation emerges, and, as a consequence, optimizes the search for alternatives, and compromises the best results of administrative acts in city development. Consequently, one of the aims of municipal administration of city development is to define the point where different aims will converge and to involve citizens in the process of co-administration. We also speak about two processes. The first one – defining aims; the second one – creating the foundation to make these aims legitimate via the formation of conditions and technologies that can help involve the population in the process of accepting the total aim and its realization. Discussing the topic of setting up the mechanism of interrelation with the population, we should discriminate between the mechanism of rendering services to the population and the mechanism of interrelation with the active part of the population.

We recall here the theory of L. Thévenot and L. Boltanski on the three modes of involvement into public activity that are also presented in works by B.S. Gladarev (2012) and other scholars. These scholars write about the mode of proximity, mode of planned action, mode of criticism and public justification. Under the first two modes, a man acts rationally in the legal field and transition to the third mode is less controlled and ruled. That is, in the second stage of mode of involvement, when a man researches a problem and writes letters to

those who are, in his opinion, responsible for solving the problem, and it is necessary to establish effective schemes of interrelation not for reducing the activity but for joint work with administrative bodies, finding joint solutions: a search for compromise. Then, administrative bodies must work more actively with activists in the population to become participants in the third mode of criticism: public justification and transfer the state of affairs in the situation of discussion, exchange of expert opinion, brain storming, etc. All of these things have one purpose – to shift the potential of activism into the course of constructive joint action in solving the problem and attracting more people into the process of co-administration and co-creation. Letters and complaints written by several citizens regarding one problem could become an administrative marker for active action on the part of administrative bodies. One of the organizational steps in this direction could be the establishment of a centre controlled and run by the Office of the Public Prosecutor for compilation, classification and sending of letters and complaints by citizens to proper recipients. Thus, a few problems could be solved at the same time; a citizen would not have to attend several officials in different offices in search of the solution to his/her problem; at last, not only a reverse connection with the population could be fixed, but executive work supported by activists, public organizations, movements, could be reinforced. The most important thing is that all the above steps help to set up conditions to avoid a sense of helplessness, remoteness of authorities, social apathy and nihilism. People are supposed to participate in taking decisions and these conditions promote a motivational basis for one's active civil position – a responsibility for one's own actions and for the situation in the country as a whole. This algorithm stipulates that citizens can change the passive-and-universal form of administration for the active-and-selective form.

Representatives of municipal administration should possess knowledge of the manifestation of territory identification characteristics of citizens as an index of development for territorial society, knowledge of the system of evaluation of social self-identification, social activity, norms and regulators of relations within a definite city society. All these factors can help to get not only an integrated index of the state of social space but they provide an opportunity to develop it on the basis of methods of social design.



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