RPTSS 2018
International Conference on Research Paradigms Transformation in Social Sciences

SOCIAL RESOURCES AS CONDITIONS OF WELL-BEING IN URBAN SPACE: LEGAL, SOCIOCULTURAL, COMMUNICATIONAL

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Abstract

The paper addresses the problem of resource provision of urban space and considers the priorities of socio-cultural informational and legal resources. Changes in the contemporary society have affected the territorial and spatial development of complex social communities – urban settlements. In the matters of urban development, the studies of the modern transforming world receive new symbiotic combinations, based on uniting complex socio-economic, socio-technical, communicative, and expert systems. New technological and socio-economic challenges in the space of modern cities should not be studied in isolation from the available social resources. Present-day transformations of urban areas are often carried out in latent forms and remain unexposed to public discussion by the city residents. The moderate character of the social resources mobilization for implementing changes in the territory may, in actual fact, be a consequence of social differentiation and isolationism of successful (in economic and material terms) social categories. Nevertheless, it can be assumed that a new format of urban space is emerging, i.e. a format of informational and communicational interaction built on the principles of remote access. New methodological approaches to the study of urban structures and relationships spark interest in modernization of research methods and procedures. Specific algorithms of social support methods can be beneficial for sociocultural, information and legal types of resource provision to the urban development.

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Keywords: Social recourses, urban space, social communications.

1. Introduction

A city can be seen as a multidimensional complex socio-spatial formation. The structural elements of a city are, first, natural, historical, and sociocultural objects of the urban space, which are able to meet the spiritual needs of a man and to promote restoration and development of the physical strength, and, second, communicational and legal facilities, which help an individual to integrate into the community and solve important every-day life issues. The mental superstructure of urban space is the collective unconscious of the urban community, which has a specific resource potential. The collective consciousness of the urban community imprints the image of the city that affects the identity of citizens.

1.1. Features of urban space

Cities attract people with the vibe of their resources, creating conditions for access to the cultural heritage, conduct of business, leisure, household comforts, healthcare, and education. These features of 'well-being resources' pool to form an urban socio-cultural space where "strategic patterns of behavior – a certain complete image of a person – emerges [...]. This image is made of signs and cultural symbols (verbal and nonverbal), role repertoire and impressions that can be purposefully managed" (Political Consciousness and Behavior: Evolution and Mobilization, 2016, p. 21).

1.2. Definition of social resources

The resources of space have such properties as renewability (administrative, legal, sociocultural, communicational, emotional, creative, etc.), limitation (dimensions of expensive historical and protected areas), non-renewability (mineral resources, architecture). If the power elites and the criminal structures fight for the non-renewable and limited resources, life in such city becomes dangerous and the 'quality of place' deteriorates. The value of renewable resources lies in their accessibility. Those in power give them considerably less attention and such recourses stay on the periphery of their interests. The renewable resources remain available for activities of the citizens who set up their living space. These resources turn a territory into a *meaningful place* and hence become the foundation of the citizens' well-being and a practical asset of the city. Therefore, they require special care of the city authorities.

2. Problem Statement

The problem of studying urban spaces appears relevant from the perspective of variability or 'fluidity' of the urban culture, the image of cities, their design, style, creativity of the population, the difference between public and private zones, etc. The problem of urban studies is, in essence, the balance of two aspects: the city as a space and the city as a place (Sogomonov, 2015). The city territory includes the climate comfortableness, the specific features of real estate development, the availability of social infrastructure, the productive (economic) activity of people who define the social structure (Soloviev, 1965). It consists of administrative districts, bedroom communities, suburbs, etc. The resource of the territory is climatic conditions, geographical location, landscape, spatial dimensions in terms of extension vs. compactness. These resources determine the diversity of thematic urban concepts: Green City, Winter City, Smart City, Healthy City, Slow City (Davis & Wayne, 2015). Natural, climatic features, transforming into social and administrative resources, give birth to the social space of the city. In this sense, cities are

participants of the competition "for human and money flows, for administrative and intellectual resources, for investments and attractiveness for business, for social and cultural capitals, for the cleanliness of their environment and comfortable life inside the city" (Sogomonov, 2015).

The architectural appearance of the city evolves into a specific resource. This, the resources of buildings and their locations become a lever for managing infrastructure and business. The conflict of interest around the socially significant space intensifies. Ill-grounded decisions by the city authorities on informal meeting places and recreation areas create void spaces that the citizens find too dull. The fact that municipalities ignore the need to design public spaces with their political potential turns the city into a commercial space that serves private interests. Waldenfels (2002) points to the dichotomy of the common and the private, which manifests itself in the fact that economically motivated particular interests are detrimental to the common. Such actions exclude broad public discussions, and this determines the dramatics of the situation. It seems that ordinary citizens are not taken into account. Bauman (1998) highlights that in the conflict of interests the citizens are deprived of all ethical levers, and the resources that can limit the harm, inflicted to the citizens, are expropriated.

The agents, heading political movements, and power structures use the delegated rights to gain the political space (Kravchenko, 2010).

The cultural and mental space of the city, which is built over the geospatial territory, is its meaning. This is the space of feelings that unites the citizens, turning residents into a community. The meaningful city is an ideal of a territory that fills the collective consciousness of the citizens, gives the mental understanding of the city to its inhabitants, and determines the sense of place. The quality and the location of places shape the citizens' way of life. The official places include town halls and other administrative buildings with the surrounding territories, while the places of energy are cinemas, churches, marketplaces and the places of memory are historical and natural sites, cemeteries, etc. that spread their charm onto the living space. In addition, the living space is full of intermediate places between work and home – the 'third places' such as cafes, pubs, clubs (Oldenburg, 2014) having the energy of attraction (feelings, contacts, personal interactions).

The problem of resource allocation consists in taking into account the diversity and the priority of sociocultural needs of the citizens. In modern conditions, the quality of resources, the time and place of their mobilization can often be more significant than the scope and the character of resource replenishment. The institutional level of the social resource application can be characterized by mass-scale provision, while the individual and personal level anticipates self-organization (socio-cultural potential of the population, traditions and customs of the local community).

A potential resource for solving vital issues in the cities is local self-government. Following the European experience and transforming own practices of socio-political interaction, the mechanisms of regulation of urban living are changing in Russia. The principle of subsidiarity was reformed (the 1985 European Charter of Local Self-Government). The constitutional entrenchment of the separation of public power into state and municipal branches brought new conditions for the interaction between the government structures and the self-organizing population. As soon as the law on local self-government was adopted on 6 July 1991 (No. 1550-1 "On local self-government in the RSFSR"), a new stage in the development of

local self-government began: a number of federal laws and more than 1.300 normative legal acts, regulating relations in the field of local self-government, followed.

The problems, related to the cooperation of the authorities and civil society, remain urgent. These include difficulties of communication, lack of trust to municipal authorities, estrangement of local authorities from the society. There develop new formats of public appeals to the governors, deputies of the State Duma, and the president. The content analysis of TV program Direct Line with Vladimir Putin showed that the appeals are most frequently related to housing issues, which can be resolved by local authorities.

3.   Research Questions

The urban social space is embodied in territorial, economic, sociocultural ties between the citizens. The spaces of everyday life and privacy with the requirements of comfort and convenience are built over it. The historical significance of architectural ensembles of the cities, adjacent to the residential areas (houses, yards, parks), turns spaces into *places*. The presence of places determines the semantic structure of the city: it breaks down into *meaningful places*. Actually, the city lives because meaningful places fill it with life.

Flusty (1997, pp. 48-49) considered that cities have "slippery spaces" (spaces that cannot be reached, due to contorted, protracted or missing paths of approach), "crusty spaces" (spaces that cannot be accessed, due to obstructions such as walls, gates, and checkpoints), and "jittery spaces" (spaces that cannot be utilized unobserved due to active monitoring by roving patrols and). People try to avoid such places, choosing homes, courtyards, and other commonly accessible areas for meetings with friends, etc. People feel responsible for them, exhibiting a sense of belonging to the space. It is these everyday-life spaces that fill the collective consciousness of the citizens with meanings. Thus, the mental map, marking essential and empty spaces, is formed.

The conditions, taken into account when choosing a place of living, are 'the quality of place' (Florida, 2007). This is an alternative to the notion of 'quality of life'. The quality of place has three dimensions: (1) what is there: a combination of natural and architectural environment, the atmosphere for creativity; (2) who is there: people, signs that any person can find a place here; (3) what is going on in there: street energy, cafe culture, art, music, outdoor leisure opportunities. The quality of place is the sum of the citizens' experiences, embodied in the communicational resource, in the specificity (or presence) of street culture, in the intelligent environment, in the creativity (social, scientific, technical, landscape) of urban communities. Having the properties and characteristics of a 'big place', a city allows choosing personal experiences: to select from a spectrum of feelings, to increase or decrease their intensity at will, while not only consuming one or another experience, but also participating in its creation (Florida, 2007).

The union of territory and 'place' embodies the resource of the city space. The results of the research conducted by Russian Public Opinion Research Center (VCIOM) demonstrate the orientation of the Russian population, especially young adults, toward mobile social practices. According to the public opinion poll of young adults in the Siberian regions (VCIOM, 2012), there is a cohort of citizens who are going to continue living and making careers the cities of their residence within the Siberian macroregion. The respondents named the following factors, restraining them from moving to another place: the opportunity to purchase housing locally (39 %); guaranteed employment by profession in the region (31 %);

family circumstances (31 %). Interestingly, 18 % of respondents named a guaranteed non-specialized job in the region as a factor that keeps them from moving elsewhere. Such examples demonstrate the importance of social resources in studying the problems of modern urban areas.

4. Purpose of the Study

Regulation and energy reproduction of the life of the city depends on sociocultural, communicational, administrative and legal resources. The purpose of the study is to justify the characteristics of a safe open urban space that combines the elements of administrative and legal management and the freedom of social creativity of the citizens, coming from different social strata and having various sociocultural needs and preferences.

5. Research Methods

The methodological principles, used for constructing a conceptual scheme of the sociocultural space of an open city, were the humanistic orientation of conceptual positions and the culture-centricity as the semantic core of sociocultural practices. The functional basis of the methodology was the study of the mobility of the resource potential of urban areas. The method of analysis of informational and communicational resources of urban space was the interdisciplinary semiotic approach (John Law). The material aspect lies in the fact that the semiotic logic, previously attributed to language, extends to things; objects, united by semiotic relations, organize a special material and semiotic space (Florida, 2007). Analysis of the space and its communicational properties requires the use of methodologically related research platforms that combine quantitative visual and projective methods with qualitative methodology (social mapping, vernacular method, mental maps, interviews in the third place format, imitation methods). New methodological approaches to the study of urban structures and relations spark interest in modernizing research methods and procedures (Live maps, survey methods in the format of remote or deferred access, online research, innovative engineering).

6. Findings

The sociocultural resources support the aesthetic, historical, cultural, and recreational potentials (Gutnov & Glazychev, 1990). The social resource is embodied in the specific nature of the urban community (health, culture, sex and age, professions of the citizens). In some cases, the sociocultural environment turns out to be a living space, in which a creatively oriented person finds it easy to breathe. In other cases, this environment makes the presence of a person, having a different individual culture, impossible as the creative aspirations are restrained and irrelevant norms and intolerable social habits are imposed. A person with marked abilities and lateral thinking is expelled from such environment (Shpak, 1991). The concept of 'open city' assumes the transformation of the sociocultural resources into the space of 'places' and the actualization of its potentials. Such city accepts a variety of life styles and socio-cultural practices. This makes it possible to involve people with a high standard of culture and a unique lifestyle and to update the socio-cultural resources of the city.

The mechanisms that replenish the resources of the urban space are continuity and inheritance. They actualize the traditions of leisure and urban improvement, consolidate socially useful initiatives and

practices of young citizens in the organization of living space (Rex, 1968). The enthusiasm, shown by urban communities and subcultural, age, ethnic, etc. groups to improve the quality of place, attracts more participants in the initiative groups.

The incoherence of actions of the municipal authorities and the initiative communities roots in the contradictions between the stereotyped idea that the officials have on the sociocultural needs of the citizens and the virtual variety of preferences of people with a higher standard of culture and a unique styles of life (students, subcultural groups, ethnic and confessional communities, etc.). The municipal authorities are unprepared for the transformation of popular leisure activities, beautification practices, and the need for changing the functional purpose of urban 'places'. Associations of citizens also exist separately. Each of them is focused on a narrow social (cultural, ethnic, confessional) group. They symbolically fix their otherness and claim a 'place of their own' (spontaneous design of street culture sites). The human need to territorially fix the cultural identity appears stronger than the restraining rules of 'city management'. The citizens display a variety of outdoor space designs, dress codes, types and styles of consumption (leisure activities, shopping, etc.).

One of the linking chains of constructing and supporting an efficient dialogue between the city authorities and the population is the informational and communicational environment of modern urban space. With the advent of the contemporary concepts such as smart cities, nomadic cities, innovative cities, and others, the public institutions and the development drivers faced the need for a high-quality proactive informational and communicational support to transforming urban communities.

The informational and communicational environment of a city can be characterized by:

- the availability of points of collective access to information resources (ideas, patents, technologies and images of smart city, etc.);
- a variety of social portraits of urban infrastructure, architecture, topology, unique personal images;
- changes in urban communication (new semantic models, remote access, virtual discourse, machine dialogue, virtual installations, etc.);
- the availability of common user channels and codes of social communication (the idea of platform technologies);
- 'double depersonalization' of a citizen's identification in communications (hidden communication in the physical space and the virtual environment);
- the availability of mobile communicational and logistics hubs (electronic expert systems, online assistance, user projects);
- the simulative nature of sociocultural, socioeconomic, and political practices of interaction in the urban environment (imitation is the image of modern reality; even if there is the original, the social communication system seeks to create simulations: models, test products, predictable and programmable social technologies);
- application of the urban space design model (a legend or a story of the city).

Thus there is a complex and multi-layered informational and communicational structure of modern cities, which is fed and reproduced by a multitude of incessantly updated social communications. But the growth of the quality content of the city communicational environment can conceal a number of

complicated and contradictory trends, for example, new 'quick links' that are not based on traditional uniting characteristics, i.e. national, ethnic and national identity. A feature of the new qualitative saturation is the extensive growth of social networks, although their structural conductivity and social stability is not supported by regional, ethnic, or family ties.

In the process of communication, such ties create an emotional resource. The threat of mobilization of this resource can lead to destabilization of social relations in various forms. For example, long-lasting discontent of the citizens provokes dispersed aggression and social apathy, the sources of which the citizens often fail to identify. Lack of self-awareness and exclusion of the citizens from the life of the urban community result in the ambivalent behavior, the susceptibility to rumors and threats, and the accumulation of emotional energy, which can spill out in the form of social protests in critical situations. The positive feature of the emotional resource lies in the social sentiment. It affirms the love of the citizens to their city, the feeling of belonging to a certain 'place', and the value potential of the social memory of the urban community. The integrating core of the resource potential is the social code of the city. This is the pillar event, filled with sacred meaning and energy of emotions and preserved by the social memory (Logunova, 2009). This meaning is agreed upon and shared by the urban community members. It defines the identity of citizens, divides people into 'us' and 'them' (guests of the city). In the collective consciousness of the citizens, it manifests itself in the experience of the common past, and in the everyday life it is fixed by the rituals, recreating the meaning of the city being born. The sociocode defines traditions, promotes the preservation of social experience, and serves as a reference point for life choices in crisis situations. The sociocode is connected with the mental resource: everything that contradicts the content of social memory is perceived as a threat, which entails protest forms of behavior. However, the citizens are ready to support the decisions of the authorities, which cohere with the sacred meanings in the social memory.

7. Conclusion

In summary, a city is a territory, a geographical place, a space, a mental place. It is governed by the authorities, but lives the life of the citizens. The territory of the city, which is regarded as a resource, is fought for. 'Places' are symbolically appropriated by the citizens, the authorities, the business, etc. Such appropriation fills traditional and new practices with special meanings.

The texture of the urban space is connected with the experiences of the population in the social and cultural landscape, which is formed symbolically, delineating the residential territory into zones of cultural attraction. The city grinds the space of sociocultural differences into a single cultural space that retains its diversity and multidimensionality. The essential actor in the city is a person, a resident, a citizen with their own idea what a city should be to correspond to their standard of culture and their identity. The space of the city is formed around the man; and the man fills it with the meaning, organizes this space according to the idea of a normal life, symbolically appropriates the urban space and gives it the necessary social resources. It notes the role of youth, social communications, the hidden or deferred reserves of the participants learning new things.

On the basis of a network approach the paper proposes to consider perspective directions of attracting intellectual social resources in order to support socio-political interaction. The Internet space is

seen as a major creative platform for positioning socio-political interests and various innovations, initiating a dialogue between the population and the authorities.

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