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ECOLOGICAL ROUTES AS FACTOR OF ECOLOGICAL CULTURE DEVELOPMENT IN URBAN SPACE

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Abstract

The article presents the philosophical, sociological and cultural aspects of the social space and its usage in the creation of the health-preserving environment for the life of the population. In the modern society, the search for the ethical foundations of the triad "nature-human-culture" becomes relevant; the environmental ethics and the environmental consciousness formed via this ethics become preferential. This idea conditions the special role of the social space as a component of the considered triad, which affects each of its structural elements. As a rule, the urban space is an output of the human activity, it represents the interconnection and interdependence of various social worlds and territories. At the present stage of the development of society, there is an acute complicated problem of the urban ecology. The human right to a city as a means of changing themselves via the modification of the urban environment is analyzed. The local spatial segments become a part of the human everyday life, acquiring the legal status and forming the urban ecology. Within the context of the spatial paradigm the interrelation of the geographical features and sociocultural phenomena gives the whole spectrum of possibilities for understanding the specificity of the social space. One of the most efficient means of solving the problem is an ecological and health-improving path (route) within the urban space if there is a preserved natural area that promotes the health of the urban population and the development of the ecological culture of the population.

Keywords: Ecological consciousness, social space, urban space, natural space, urban ecology, ecological route.

1. Introduction

The development of the ecological consciousness and axiological system that determined the cultural development, the status of the human existence and the principles of the mutual relations of the binary matched pair "nature-human" are historically and socially conditioned. The biological, psychological and social characteristics of human beings specified these processes and gave them integrity, the basis of which was the material and spiritual activity of the mankind, its desire to transform the world and to know oneself.

The archaic mythological consciousness defined the nature as something alive, that is not always well-disposed to one of its particles – a human; but, as it is known, a part cannot dominate the whole. The first step towards the formation of the modern ecological consciousness was made at the moment when the "herd morality" acquired a new form and became the "totemic morality" (Semenov, 2002, p. 346), because totemism forming the relations within the tribe became one of the first special regulators of relations in the "nature-human" system, because it limited the killing of taboo animals.

The first people who tried to theoretically base the laws and rules of the relationship between the nature and human were the ancient Greeks who laid the foundation for those contradictions that would become a rub in the way of the development of the modern ecological consciousness. Two conceptions of the nature became Scylla and Charybdis of the ancient Greek culture: 1) the nature as a model of beauty, harmony, morality, order, and 2) the Aristotelian statement "... if the nature does not create anything unfinished and in vain, it should be admitted that it creates everything for people" (Aristotle, 1983). In the first case the ethical and aesthetic criteria are regarded, however, in the second case Aristotle formulates his thesis to confirm the human right of ownership, thereby introducing new practical, applied measures into the system of relations between human and nature.

Christianity entirely takes humans beyond the harmony of nature. On the one hand, the world of nature was still harmonious and beautiful, for it was created by God. On the other hand, in the hierarchical vertical of the world order the position of the animal and plant worlds was strictly fixed – after the laity. The "creation hierarchy" changed the disposition of the pair "nature-human" to "human-nature"; it also introduced the additional conditions of submission and control over what God, having created, gave to the human beings into these relations.

During the Renaissance epoch the dilemma appeared: the nature became a source of beauty and inspiration again, but it also acquired a new status – that of a workshop. In the relationship "human-nature" the system of subordination and control was replaced by a system of exploitation, because at this moment the humanity began a new round of its development – industrial. However, both nature and human remained the main components of the axiological system of the cultural picture of the world during that period.

The revision of the ideological disposition is also made during the Early Modern Time. A kind of intermediary is formed between human and nature – science. The Human of the Early Modern Time does not want to "check algebra via harmony," he prefers to check harmony via algebra and his own mind. The differentiation "nature-human" receives a new component – culture; this ratio will determine the picture of the world and the principles of its existence during the long period of time. Philosophy asserts the axiological proposition of nature endowing it with the status of the norm, the model of everything that is right and healthy, that is, natural. The speculators of the Early Modern Time oppose the "natural man" who

is "beautiful and majestic" as he is created by the nature to an artificially organized way of living, primarily urban. During the Early Modern Time, the image of a person is equal to a subject – "a performer of significant actions", to an independent and active personality evolving on the basis of his own potency and his own initiative (Guardini, 1990, p. 139). The introduction of the third component (culture) into the "nature-human" differentiation inevitably changed its general interpretation. "The world ceases to be a creature and becomes "nature"; the human business ceases to be a ministry expressing obedience to the Creator and becomes a "creation" itself; a person, who was a servant and a slave, becomes a "creator" ... filled with the will to "culture" he undertakes the construction of his own being" (Guardini, 1990, p. 140).

By the beginning of the 20th century, the trend of the human life standardization has been clearly manifested in culture. The rapid development of science and technology inevitably changed the axiological basis of the picture of the world. From now on, the technical progress becomes the criterion of the correct, and, therefore, exclusively necessary, development of culture. At the level of everyday culture, the practical values become the most important: comfort, wealth, convenience. In the everyday consciousness, the idea of the cultural progress is replaced by the idea of scientific, technical and economic progress. The manufacture standardizes the space surrounding a person making it more primitive. An English aesthetician William Morris in the lecture "Useful Work Versus Useless Toil" noted that imposing the principles of standard comfort on a city dweller could have extremely dangerous consequences. The urban environment and the territories around the cities and towns are losing their natural basis, the houses of most citizens are cheap and ugly, as well as the factories where they work; besides, the exhausting greyness of the cities is extremely dangerous, it deprives a person of uniqueness, creative potential, desire for creation, it makes him "passive and unhappy" (Morris, 1973, p. 223). Human and culture are not compatible in an ugly industrial city.

The 20th century was marked by the development of a new picture of the world. A new type of culture was established – industrial culture with the inevitable crisis in the spiritual foundations of the human existence. R. Guardini notes that "the means of this culture make it possible to solve the increasingly subtler and increasingly more powerful tasks of cognition and activity and thereby approach what could be called the entity of history: the transformed and conquered world" (Guardini, 1997, p.106). Technology, machinery, instruments and their production – all of this "has no relation to benefit or well-being, it's about power; about power in the broadest sense of the word. The holder of such power tries to grab the primary elements of nature and human existence" (Guardini, 1990, p. 144). Thus, it is technology, not science, that becomes a mediator between human and nature. The relationship "human-nature" "is mediated by calculations and instruments. It loses visibility, turning into something abstract and formal. The liveliness of the feelings disappears; a business technical approach takes its place" (Guardini, 1990, p. 148).

A lot of researchers pay attention to the fact that in the 20th century culture takes the first place in the differentiation "nature-culture-human". It is one of the most important criteria of the living quality, the center of a personal realization, because due to its essence culture can embrace and absorb all person's achievements in various areas of life. At the same time, this interpretation of culture is hazardous since it endows culture with the unlimited power over the human existence and nature. The acme of power implies the high level of responsibility that modern culture lacks. It is not capable of giving a person the unambiguous norms and models that he could use to construct his life or principles of relationship with

nature. The elements of nature getting into the sphere of the human activity and freedom acquire new creative possibilities; but until a person mediates these transformed elements by the moral norms, these changes can be dangerous both for human and for these transformed elements of nature. Thus, the search for moral, ethical grounds for the functioning of the "nature-human-culture" triad becomes relevant again. The ecological ethics and ecological consciousness formed on its basis can be extremely helpful in organizing the life of both an individual and community of people as well as of the place of their living. Such transformations must be done in the modern cities and towns.

The logic of the cultural evolution and the upheavals experienced by the mankind during this period made the search for new interpretations of the notions of nature, human and culture necessary. The intensification of the human scientific activity led to the fact that the scientific picture of the world lost its stability and the necessary minimum clarity which it possessed until the Modern times. The process of the human alienation from nature which started in the 1930s continued at the beginning of the 21st century. The axiological status of nature, its functioning as a standard of naturalness and significance was called into question. However, currently, the situation is changing. The business attitude to nature, its interpretation as space and material for work and transformations, unlimited experiments brought the humanity to the verge of an ecological catastrophe. The neo-antiquity maturing within the frames of the postmodern culture influenced the evolution of the modern ecological consciousness. Nowadays, the idea of "returning to nature" and organizing the life according to the natural laws seems attractive to many people. And for those people who are not ready to leave the noisy smoggy cities the creation of ecological zones within the urban space becomes urgent. Perhaps this is the chance to bring the "nature-human-culture" triad to a new level.

The most important coordinate of the picture of the world is space, no matter what scale is chosen for it: the universe or the "place" of an individual. It is this feature that makes space the object and subject of many sciences; among them there is sociology of space embracing the whole complex of disciplines including the urban sociology. Space is multidimensional and can be of three main types: natural, social, informational (Mezentsev, 2011). Natural space is space that is not developed by humans and has its natural character. According to A. Einstein, this is not emptiness. This space has parameters and quality, the first of which is the property of measurability with the parameter – dimension of measurability. The second quality should be attributed to the temporary quality (Einstein, 1922).

The natural space can be correlated with the geographical one which is commonly understood as several layers of the geographic shell that are laid over each other and partially intersecting: lithosphere (the earth's crust), soil layer, hydrosphere as well as space-time continuum developed during the process of blending and interweaving (Buldakova, 2014). The natural space refers to the physical one, it is interpreted as space that is untouched by humans and has retained its natural character (for example, areas of unplowed steppe, river valleys).

In urban planning the term "natural" defines the interrelated elements of nature as opposed to engineering systems of the anthropogenic origin (forest parks, water reservoirs, gardens, and various lawns). In view of the territorial aspect, the social space can be understood as a developed part of the natural space used for human living. At the junction of the natural, social and information space, new forms of space are emerging, for example, ecospace.

The term "sociology of space" was introduced into science at the beginning of the twentieth century by G. Simmel in the work with the same name (Simmel, 1996). He regarded space to be social as it is acquired: produced, experienced, used by a social author. "Sociology of space" as a concept was researched in the works by P. Bourdieu, who was interested in the philosophical, sociological and cultural aspects of social space. He understands it as a construct of subspaces filled with various types of activity and capital: economic, intellectual, political. Simmel distinguishes between physical and social space, however, Bourdieu insists on their unity, which is based on social stratification. The city has its center and suburbs, ghettos and places where "lots of money and power live", they do not coincide geographically, but they all constitute the social space (Bourdieu, 2005).

The transition to the specific sociological study of the social space is associated with the research activity of Chicago scientific group. The city becomes a core unit of the social space, being the natural habitat of a civilizational man. R. Park, one of the leaders of the group, believes that the city is as a living organism, and it is possible to understand its essence only via the relationship of its environmental, economic, political, social and cultural (communicative and symbolic) components (Park, 2002). The ecological approach represents the city as a constellation of various social worlds: the world of geographically non-congruent (segregated) districts; the worlds of professional groups (famous Chicago killings); religious communities; territories divided between teenage gangs, etc. Although the project itself was devoted to this very city, it influenced the further development of the sociology of space a lot.

In the second half of the 20th century the development of the theoretical component of the sociology of space is conditioned by the works of the French philosopher and sociologist A. Lefebvre. According to A. Lefebvre, the city is "a projection of society on the Earth, that is, it is not only a specific location, but a special space perceived and experienced by the thought that determines its material and social components" (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 64). The urban space is a visualization of the specific way of living of the society.

At the present stage of the human development there is an acute and complicated problem of recreation and health promotion of the urban population within the framework of the habitat and that of developing an environmentally cultural person. One of the efficient means of solving the problem can be an ecological recreational path (route) within the urban area if there is a preserved natural area.

2. Problem Statement

Working out the ecological routes in an urban environment, using them to develop the environmental culture, implementing the environmental education of the population are the key problems that are always topical. Nicole M. Ardoin, Charlotte Clark and Elin Kelsey in their work *An Exploration of Future Trends in Environmental Education Research* published in *Environmental Education Research* (Ardoin, Clark, Kelsey, 2012) describe the future trends in environmental education and point out that there is an urgent need for studies among the urban population, they are of great interest, but, currently, such studies are very scarce. The relevance of the study is conditioned by the insufficiently developed basis revealing the modern approaches and technologies of organizing methodological work on an ecological path in the socio-natural environment of an urban area at the theoretical and methodological level.

It may seem that there are a lot of various studies in the field of using the ecological path under the natural conditions in the development of the ecological culture, however, the following problems are not still solved:

- the concept of "urban space" is generalized in the scientific papers insufficiently;

- the natural component untouched by the human activity and having the influence on the society is not included in the urban space;

- there is poor justification of integrating the urban and natural environments into a single socio-natural complex, which can be widely used, for example, for recreation, educational activities, development of the ecological culture of the urban population.

3. Research Questions

What may be the subject of the article? The researchers pay attention to the intersection of education, upbringing and practice within the context of socio-ecological communities (for example, to the relationship between the knowledge of the environmental state and improving it for humans); there is a need for research among the city residents (to study their attitude to the state of the environment, to find efficient ways to improve it or compensate its negative impact on the health of the residents of the urban districts, etc.). The subject of the article is the search for the ways of connecting the urban and natural environments within the city to improve its citizens' health and develop the ecological culture of the urban residents. The explanatory Russian dictionaries determine a path as a "narrow trodden road" in various natural spaces, for example, forest path, animal path. A route is a "travel line" primarily used in the description of social space. This is confirmed by the normative documents of urban planning, in which it is indicated that a path is a travel line in nature, and a route is a travel line within the city territory. In the given study the concept of "ecological path" is used according to its location – at the junction of the social (urban) and natural environments.

4. Purpose of the Study

The aim of the work is to justify the importance of ways connecting the urban and natural environments and reducing the negative impact of a city on the human health, as well as awareness of the role of the natural *component* in the social world and development of the nature-aligned ecological culture of urban residents.

5. Research Methods

A. Lefebvre insists that the interdisciplinary approach to the study of social space must be applied. In the preface to one of the publications of *Production of Space* he writes that "space is fragmented in geographical, sociological, historical, etc. due to the usage of simplified methodological postulates. At best, it is understood as an empty environment that is indifferent to its content as the space of physicists, mathematicians *and* philosophers" (Lefebvre, 1974, p. 1-2).

The interdisciplinary approach, however, has some drawbacks as well. "What is a city?" – A. Lefebvre asks. – "Geographical environment, historical environment, sociological one or economic one? Semiotics will describe symbols and signs that surround individuals and groups, the social psychology will

describe the groups formed by individuals. We will have a number of fragmentary descriptions and analytical judgments. The functional localization, even if it is integrated, still falls to numerous pieces. The result is a blind spot effect"(Lefebvre, 1970, p. 246).

A. Lefebvre proposes an approach that, in his opinion, could allow clarifying both the social (political) and *theoretical* status of knowledge about space. He offers the trinomial model of space. First of all, this triad includes the space as it is perceived (physical). Secondly, it includes the space as it is understood, or the mental space of those who directly "work" with it: geographers, architects, builders, politicians. Due to this interpretation the various ideologies of space arise. Thirdly, it is the space of living: apartment, house, country. The everyday experience determines the significance and value of this space for the individual endowing it with a symbolic character.

A. Lefebvre believes that using this methodology will help to avoid the extremes of rationalism, empiricism, sociologism or philosophism, scientism and axiologism. He evades the dilemma: either space is a part of nature and *humans* change its geographical and economic characteristics, or it is only an abstract concept which has different interpretations within the context of various sciences.

6. Findings

The most important feature of social space is that it is a product and a creation, namely, the result of the human activity. The first one is reproduced, the second one is unique and irreplaceable (Lefebvre, 1974, p. 86). The answer to the question of what a city is – creation or product is given by A. Lefebvre in the essay "Other Parises" (Lefebvre, 2008). He is convinced that both interpretaions are interrelated: creation penetrates the product, but the product does not absorb the creation, it is possible to distinguish between them only in retrospect (Lefebvre, 1974, p. 90).

Urban planning leaves traces in the form of stone, metal, concrete in space. It involves technology and science, knowledge and art and, therefore, it cannot be free from the ideology that generates urban planning illusions. The architect feels almost like a god changing the space, creating codes and signs, approaches and types of spatial representations. However, the space that he controls does not belong to him, it has other real owners. They *determine* its value which tends to grow steadily and causes real estate speculation, corruption. Capital has found opportunities for increasing in buying and selling space. "Urban planning involves the governmental intervention exceeding the authority of knowledge," A. Lefebvre writes (Lefebvre, 1970, p. 213).

The primordial right of a human to the city also turns out to be delusive; his role is reduced to the function of the man living in a certain area of space, its temporary user. The space becomes another factor that intensifies the alienation which is experienced by a city resident as an inhabitant and a citizen; he "runs" into the sphere of everyday life escaping from the substitution of the experienced by the abstract. However, the urban space, according to A. Lefebvre's idea, cannot only alienate people from each other, from spiritual and material values filling it, it also has the ability to unite them giving rise to the new forms of communities, changing the symbolic values of the usual objects of the urban environment.

Analyzing the events of May 1968, A. Lefebvre shows how the adaptation and routine spaces instantly turn into a scene of a city rebellion, where the usual scenery acquires new sign meaning or returns the meaning that seems to be lost forever. In that May Paris came back again as a "big village". The

boulevards without cars became a place of folk festivals (Lefebvre, 1968, p. 231). A festival was held in Paris as the antithesis of everyday life; space became a field for joint activities. The May events showed that "democracy requires public transparency, and this public transparency itself requires a physical public place" (Lefebvre, 1968, p. 20). Since that *time* A. Lefevre defends the right to the city as a functional right of a citizen. Moreover, from the very beginning he includes in this right not only the requirement of the citizens' participation in discussion and decision-making concerning the creation or change of space (demolition, reconstruction, construction, toponymy, etc.), but the right to transform social relations in this space (Lefebvre, 1996).

The position of A. Lefebvre was supported by the well-known geographer David Harvay: the right to the city is wider than the requirement of the urban space availability; it is the right to change oneself via the modification of the urban environment (Harvay, 2008). Making the demand – "the right to the city" actualized a theoretical interest in the forms and essence of the public space. During the discussion two approaches were developed. The communicative approach implies that those spatial segments can be called public where there *are* conditions for meetings of friends and strangers (Sennet, 1981). Another approach is legal: any city space is considered public if there are no legal restrictions of its accessibility.

If one uses the metaphor of J. Jacobs and looks at public space not from "the height of a bird's flight", but "through the eyes of a pedestrian" (Jacobs, 2011), the public space is experienced not as a segment of social space, but as a way of filling it with the human presence. On the one hand, this criterion provides a basis for identifying pseudo-public spaces, on the other hand, it allows labelling the emerging forms of public spaces. Laying claim to the public space, creating its new territories, social groups, occupying it, the humans get a public status and gain the right to will expression (Mitchell, 2003, p. 129). In many Russian cities and towns, the quintessence of the pseudo-public space is the central square – the venue of official events; this space is not hospitable, mostly empty, it is only a part of the usual route of pedestrians. Consumer spaces are often disguised as public, where publicity is mostly a sales pitch (Panchenkov, 2012).

There is a need for studying public spaces, the nature of which is described by the conception of the "third place" (Oldenburg (2000) *The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Community Centres, Beauty Parlors, General Stores, Bars, Hangouts, and How They Get You Through the Day*). This *definition* can be used for "anticafe"; it is not the places of eating, but of communication, where people pay for the time spent in it. All these elements of public space are connected to wi-fi Internet channels. Their visitors can change the off-line space into the on-line one.

The civic importance undergoes changes as it becomes a space of flows, therefore, it is impossible to describe and *explore* any place only in terms of space (Castells, 1998). A. Lefebvre writes the movement of cars allows people to gather and mix without meeting at the same time (Lefebvre, 1971). The driver "does not see" the urban space, he estimates his route only in view of functionality. As to pedestrians, everyone has his/her own city and it is determined pragmatically. This local spatial segment becomes a part of everyday life.

Michel de Certeau, a French social philosopher and a cultural scientist, is convinced that one must walk around the city, "a citizen should be encouraged to walk around the city by all means" (Certeau, 1990). The pedestrian traffic forms one of those real systems that develop a city. In addition to solving the tasks of education, teaching and upbringing, which are often associated with the "eco-path" used for walking in

the city, the path also contributes to the protection of nature. The main goal of creating an ecological path could be formulated as environmental education: a combination of active leisure in the natural space that broadens the outlook; the development of the cultural relationships between people and nature.

The functions of the ecological path were studied in the works by (Maladaeva, & Tsyrendorzhieva, 2010); they researched its contribution to the organization of ecological tourism and recreation. The health-saving function of the ecological path is *studied* by Yu.N. Chernyshev (Chernyshev, 2010).

The direct communication of a city dweller with nature has recently become a luxury in view of communication with the media and theoretical environmental courses in theeducational institutions – it is like a breath of fresh air in the system of emotionally saturated, health-saving environmental education. The ecological path in the city must be worked out in such a way that it involves both areas of untouched wild nature and anthropogenic landscape. This approach helps to carry out a contrastive analysis of the natural and transformed environment, allows analyzing the direction of the human activity and its results, teaching to predict the possible results of such activities. This will contribute to the implementation of an *axiological approach* – developing the value-based attitude to the world, to oneself and to the health, which will *humanize* the naturalistic (pragmatic) attitude to it.

7. Conclusion

The urban space is the product and creation of the human activity, it is the interconnection and interdependence of various social worlds and territories. The analysis of the interrelationship between geographic entities and sociocultural phenomena provides a range of opportunities to understand the specificity of social space within the context of the spatial paradigm. The pedestrian traffic creates one of those real systems that form a city. At the present stage of the human development, there is an acute and complicated problem of recreation and improvement of the urban population health within the area of living and the development of an environmentally cultural person. One of the most efficient means of solving the problem of the urban environment can be an ecological and recreational path (route) within the urban area if there is an untouched natural space.

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