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**SOCIOCULTURAL FACTORS OF TERRITORIAL  
DEVELOPMENT: CONCEPTUAL ASPECT**

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***Abstract***

Today the problem of sustainable and balanced development of regions and local territories became particularly relevant in Russia and in the world due to the growing tendency towards globalization, advanced asymmetry and unevenness of socio-economic development of territories. Territorial development is defined by consolidated regional and local elite internally motivated for high quality and decent standard of living of the population, correct strategic objectives and tasks, etc. This requires the consideration of sociocultural features of the area and sociocultural expectations of the local population. Otherwise any efforts will not be perceived and supported by elite and local population, and may even arouse the opposition of certain groups. In many respects, the local population lost some skills of collective management and development of the total living area. As a result, we have vast territories with poorly consolidated interests of the population not capable for self-organization and self-development. The influence of sociocultural factors on economic development still lacks its unambiguous theoretical solution. Today this problem is studied from different perspectives and according to different conceptual schemes. The paper presents the study of this problem at the conceptual level, the results of which may be used for further development of the methodological tool base to study and resolve conflicts between local subcultures and social institutes, their mutual adaptation and integration in the context of formation and development of a new post-Soviet sociocultural environment in Russia and its regions.

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**Keywords:** Sociocultural factors, territory, sustainable development, ethnic economy.



## 1. Introduction

The unevenness of social and economic development of territories creates serious risks for safety of the state since depopulation and desolation of vast territories may disrupt the control over them. The currently dominating policy of territorial development mainly aimed to withdraw a resource rent and a surplus value does not ensure balanced and systematic development of regions and the area in general. The final integrative goal of economic development of the territory is a person, its population with a variety of requirements, interests and values. Area resources serve the basis for social and economic development of the territory and local communities, growth of welfare of their population. Any territory has various, partly exclusive resources, unique products manufactured only in this particular area, as well as favorable conditions for mass production of certain goods or services fostering its competitive advantages, forming the basis for economic prosperity and social wellbeing. However, in many respects these basic factors and conditions of local economic development are not sought-after by authorities and the population, often not used for the benefit of local population, but in vested interests of various persons or groups of people.

The specific and unique features of a sociocultural component of territorial economic systems predetermine individuality and contradiction of their structural, institutional, adaptation, behavioral and other characteristics. Hence, the strategy of social and economic development of such territory cannot but consider these individual features and contradictions.

## 2. Problem Statement

At present, qualitative and quantitative growth of the human capital, as well as balanced development of territories are considered as strategic priorities of spatial development of Russia. Today local communities are subject to widening segmentation of economic activity, social status, economic situation and other features, and hence, this causes the growing variety of individual and group interests. The differentiation of the population by welfare, work status, level of economic independence and type of economic behavior is more intensified these days.

However, the general degradation of the human capital, production and social infrastructure of the vast majority of territories, as well as other public benefits is followed by low distribution and accumulation of positive experience, practical knowledge and effective technologies, revival, reconstruction and development of various industries, folk crafts and trades in the economy thus generating negative synergetic and cumulative effects. In many respects, the local population lost some skills and abilities of collective management and development of the total living area, creation of collective use production and social objects, and their effective management for the benefit of the entire community. As a result, we have vast territories with poorly consolidated interests of the population not capable for self-organization and self-administration by local communities with low level of mutual trust, feeling of solidarity, and weak cooperative endeavor. Such communities are not able to ensure the integration of private and shared interests, to become a strong subject and a driving force of sustainable local development (Barlybaev, Aidarbakov, & Rakhmatullin, 2009).

All this puts the problem of sociocultural conditions and factors of economic development to the forefront. Being exposed to permanent changes, the formal structures and institutes cannot act as effective

regulators unless they are based on fundamental values, social norms and conciliatory relations in the society and the economy. In case of weakness and immaturity of basic regulators of social, including economic sociocultural relations it is hardly possible to reach a compromise, a consensus satisfying multidirectional and contradictory interests.

### 3. Research Questions

The paper summarizes current sociological approaches to the study of interaction of sociocultural environment and economy, as well as some directions of the increased role of sociocultural factors laying the groundwork for sustainable development of territories.

### 4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to justify the importance and prospects in theoretical, methodological, and practical perspective, introduction of sociocultural factors into the conceptual scheme of the territorial development strategy.

### 5. Research Methods

The study represents the synthesis of existing scientific knowledge in the field of interaction of culture and economy with results of long-term observational research of authors continuously carried out from the mid-1990s onwards. **The participants of the project are directly involved in sociocultural environment and economic life of the region and the area thus making it possible to observe** the changes under way during the entire post-Soviet period, to *establish* hidden sociocultural facts and phenomena affecting relevant economic processes. The study is also based on regular social surveys of the population in eleven municipal districts and four small cities of the Republic of Bashkortostan, Chelyabinsk and Orenburg regions. In 1994-1996 the survey covered 130 respondents, in 1999-2000 – 401, in 2010-2011 – 552, in 2012-2013 – 918 people.

### 6. Findings

All approaches to the study of interaction of sociocultural environment and economy can be divided into three main groups. The first group of researchers supports neoclassical economic behavior pattern, where sociocultural factors are considered exogenous in relation to the economic system. In this case, they merely have positive (productive values and norms) or negative (unproductive values and norms) impact on the economy thus changing preferences, creating restrictions, causing stability of habits, insights and traditions. This approach, which is tracing its origin back to M. Weber, is in particular typical for the representatives of new institutional economy (Weber, 1990; Nelson & Winter, 2002; North, 2010; Thaler, 2017; Hodgson, 2008).

Conceptualization of culturally conditioned standards of economic behavior as exogenous factors causes some problems and contradictions which are difficult to solve properly within the set methodological framework. For example, the transition from a microlevel (individual behavior) to a macrolevel (collective

behavior), the explanation of the *Asian anomaly* phenomenon that includes the economic breakthrough of a number of Asian countries, which culture is often opposed to the western culture. It shall also be noted that the model of rational economic behavior was placed in jeopardy by the cross-cultural study and research within experimental and behavioral economy. They confirm that cultural values and social norms are implicitly included into the motivation pattern of behavior, but do not serve its external limiters and incentives (Bowles, 2017; Lebedeva & Tatarko, 2007).

The second approach is characterized by the integration of sociocultural factors and economy into a single whole, into a common system. This relies upon two opposite positions. The first one, which we will conditionally call anthropological, integrates economy into a sociocultural system, considering the world as the system of meanings penetrating all components and defining them as components of a single historical type of society. The economic behavior of people is governed by basic social values and norms affecting all aspects of public life (Begelsdayk & Maseland, 2016; Zaslavskaya, 2003; Kirdina, 2004; Kleiner, 2004; Kozlowski, 1999; Polanyi, 2010).

The second position, which is called the economic imperialism, on the contrary explains the non-economic phenomena based on the principle of rationality and alternative analysis. It is believed that the principles and methods of neoclassical economic theory have universal meaning, whereas political, social and cultural phenomena, as well as the corresponding changes shall be assessed in relation to rationality (Becker, 2003). In our opinion, the availability of two opposite trends in the integration of sociocultural factors and economy into a single theoretical system demonstrates their strong interrelation, which nature and mechanism are still not clear to scientists.

From our point of view, the study of sociocultural bases of territorial development may be quite efficient if based on the approach developed within the concept of sustainable development being an alternative to the theory of economic growth. Its origin and development in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are caused by the growth of environmental and fuel and energy crises, demographic and food problem, military conflicts and terrorism threatening the mankind. These global threats caused the need to review the existing ideas of interaction between economic, social and cultural-ethical spheres in the context of their strict compliance with the laws of biosphere and the principles of humanity.

Back in 1949 the UN began to search for alternative ways of economic development during the first, and then the second (1955) international scientific and technical conferences on nature conservation (Chepurnykh, Novoselov, & Merzlov, 2006).

The scholars of the Club of Rome contributed to the appearance and further development of the concept of sustainable development. An important step was the establishment in 1983 of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) headed by the prime minister of Norway Brundtland (1987), which in 1987 prepared the Our Common Future program. It highlights the main global problems and the need to transition to the principles of sustainable development. Sustainable development was defined as "... development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland, 1987, p. 49).

In terms of dynamics the sustainable economy is the economy with information, sociocultural and institutional mechanisms, which ensure its efficient adaptation as an integral system to the changing

external environment based on adequate technological and organizational response to environmental, social and economic challenges.

The theory of sustainable development of territories gained recognition within the common concept of sustainable development.

Sustainable development of a territory can be defined as controllable system-balanced adaptive development not destroying the environment and ensuring internal integration of territorial community sufficient for indefinite effective opposition to phenomena and processes threatening wellbeing and self-development of this territory.

The author's concept of sociocultural factors specifying the existing approaches to territorial development includes the following three interconnected basic provisions supplementing and developing each other.

According to the first provision, culturally conditioned norms and values represent implicit components of the economic regulating mechanism mainly formed spontaneously throughout historical development of any community and implicitly passed down for generations. Such sociocultural environment is always present in any community of people, which are closely connected by common or interdependent interests and goals, being in uniform communication space and making a certain integrity. Unlike obvious explicit rules, the implicit norms cannot be cancelled or quickly changed at someone's will. They are tough to change and evolve under the influence of a set of conditions and factors being in complex dependence. Though referring to factors of soft influence, the sociocultural factors are beyond any competition in terms of their influential capacity and efficiency. Moreover, the efficiency of obvious norms and rules is finally defined by what implicit values and norms they rely on, to what extent do they comply with implicit social norms and rules developed through history and deeply-rooted in activity of the given community. In this regard, it is possible to talk about the basic nature of the latter in relation to the former one. By only studying the obvious institutional structure of economy, we will not be able to understand its fundamental characteristics and regularities determined by deep motives, restrictions, prerequisites and conditions. The economic phenomena and economic processes shall be studied as realities that inseparably include obvious and implicit components in indissoluble unity (Barlybaev et al., 2009).

The main idea of the other conceptual provision is that the semantic meaning of human behavior in the economic sphere is defined by the combination of social factors, contextual ties and relations, i.e. an implicit cultural and ethical framework. The same formal norms and rules, interaction mechanisms (e.g. market mechanism) may have different application in terms of social impact and efficiency. It depends on the social context, the level of culture and morality in a society, their meaning and value given by the majority of people within cultural values, ideology and ethics dominating in the society. These are the values-based core principles, ideas and beliefs, mutual commitments and living patterns that set the importance of economic activity of people in a given society and define its deep motives, objectives and restrictions.

Harmonious and dynamic economic development of the country in general, as well as its regions and local territorial communities is not possible without the context defined by adequate social environment, efficient social institutions deeply rooted into the human life by self-governed and

spontaneous social networks generating positive multiplicative and synergetic effects in the cumulative mode.

The third conceptual provision is that the sociocultural environment of any territorial community does not represent any monolithic unity, but consists of several subcultures reflecting social, age, ethnic, clan, professional or other features of various groups of people living in a given territory. These subcultures may supplement each other, coexist peacefully thereby creating a symbiosis. Or the subculture may set the tone being a dominant seeking for superiority over other subcultures thus displacing the latter ones to the periphery of the sociocultural life of the territory. There may be countercultures opposing the dominating subculture and seeking to change the existing scenario. Effective territorial development is only possible provided the sociocultural environment creates prerequisites for consensus on strategically important problems and mechanisms of their solution between elites, elite and population, various social groups.

## 7. Conclusion

Summarizing the above it is possible to note that the described conceptual approach to the interaction of economy and cultural-ethical environment of the society may serve theoretical and methodological basis for further extensive cross-disciplinary study in specified territories. This approach makes it possible to achieve more exact and detailed description of the mechanism on the one hand effecting economic development of culturally conditioned norms and rules, social institutes, and on the other one – influence of economic changes on sociocultural environment of the area, the region, and the country.

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