Contemporary Urban Space: Social Reflection

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Abstract. The article deals with the social nature of the city, modern urban processes and their impact on human life. The continuous growth of the urban population is a trend of the last century and at the same time a sociocultural challenge that changes the parameters of human life. Indeed, for a comfortable living in the city it is not enough to take into account the requirements of the engineering and technical networks of the architectural space, it is necessary to take into account other aspects of human interaction with the urban environment. This is important for the further social development of the urban lands, for the formation and promotion of a benevolent attitude of the residents to their city, and a sincere desire to improve its environment. These tasks are also priority guidelines for the public policy. The marginalization of urban space in a number of its forms opposes these tasks; on the contrary, it forms a marginal urban identity among the residents, manifested in the absence of attachment to the city, indifferent and irresponsible, and sometimes criminal attitude to it and its objects. The way out that the authors see is expanding social cooperation, involving townspeople in the development of the urban environment, stimulating public initiative in this area; strengthening the interaction of the public urban circles with managers; in establishing a dialogue between them.

1. Introduction
The increase of the role of the cities in the modern society, the process of urbanization contributed to the emergence of a very large social group – the townspeople. It is distinguished by both its geographical feature and everyday practices, their structure, and general mentality. It is important to understand how these differences depend on the urban environment itself, its social, natural, spatial structure.

Life in the city obviously has great benefits for the human. It usually has a more comfortable living environment, easier access to education, medicine, cultural objects, more opportunities for creative self-realization and earning money, etc. Colossal are the opportunities of the city in terms of vertical mobility, stratified dynamics, class and group profile of the residents. But at the same time, the urban space, like any powerful factor of social influence, has a negative effect on people, being a source of high mental stress and consecutive disorders, leading to an increase in the number of certain diseases. The city structures mass consciousness, forms it in a more pragmatic form, forcing it to obey more material rules and goals. They are generated by a high pace and standard of living (compared to rural areas), the necessity to subordinate to one degree or another the bar of modern consumption, forcing to reconsider the old establishment and canons of behavior. In turn, this changes the levels of the human value consciousness, enhances social anomie [1].
2. City and its environment: social impact factors

2.1. Urban space with the eyes of sociologists

The spatial structure of the city is a reflection of the social relations, social differences, both between individuals and between groups, and shows the degree of social inequality and stratification of society. Many cities are divided by invisible borders and are very often characterized by physical separation, inequality becomes a source of the formation of urban geography with concentrated disadvantages [2].

The city may as a source of formation of various types of behavioral disturbances - deviations, serve as an accelerator for deviant behavior. A person in the city gains some freedom, but at the same time loses “the spontaneity of self-expression, morale and a sense of participation that accompany life in an integrated society”, “weakening of family ties, decline of the family in the social significance, disappearance of the neighborhood and the undermining of the traditional basis of social solidarity” [3]. This entails the spread and strengthening of the state of anomie - a situation of weakening or devaluation of significant social conventions, values, patterns, standards, and also contributes to the growth of crime in society [4].

The heterogeneity of the urban population often faces with the homogeneity of the environment, when large quarters are built up with similar residential buildings, which depersonalizes the living environment and, in fact, largely depersonalizes the everyday life of a human. The same zoning and space design deprives him of psychological attractiveness and aesthetics, forcing the people to develop a simplified, compromise perception of it.

This unification of the regime, routine, actions, purchases, tactical goals is combined in practice with the difficulty of social control measures, high anonymity of the urban environment, as well as concentrated inequality of the opportunities on the same “patch” of the city. In the end, the situation may push a person to the cultural edge, depriving him of any sense of individuality, turning the familiar but monotonous circle of life, things, ideas into an absolute. Ordinary consciousness in this form generates the general indifference of the personality, reduces social and creative activity, etc. A more important consequence for us of this decline in personal culture is general aggression and even hatred of the city - vandalism, inappropriate graffiti, spoiling and destruction of the city property. This is a decrease in the social responsibility of the citizens; so almost everyone is responsible only for their “square meters”, maintains cleanliness and order in them, but everything that appears behind the front door, in the entrance hall, in the yard is no longer considered “their” territory. Accordingly, their condition is often deplorable.

The interaction of a human and city is communication. Only it does not occur in the usual verbal format (with the exception of the textual advertising messages, etc.). The urban space broadcasts to the people the ideas about beauty, grandeur, history, fashion, etc. It visualizes their value, “communicates” with its residents with the help of visual solutions and objects – architectural, landscape, promotional, street ones, etc. Accordingly, the parameters of friendliness, comfort, safety, ergonomics and aesthetics of the urban environment today are especially important in social term.

2.2. A human in marginal urban environment

Being very dynamic, heterogeneous, multifactorial, the space of a big city gives a human many different opportunities, functions, tells him many development pathways, makes him enter into many contacts and interactions, react to their impulses, constantly coordinate his activity, subordinate it to the city format. Of course, for many, such a regime is difficult, or even unbearable. A person is forced to lower his bar, revise priorities, release time.

The modern urban spaces are developing upwards, being built up with multi-storey residential compounds, which gives rise to a huge number of people “per a square meter” of land, often extremely increasing the residential density of an urban area or city, in general, making social interactions of an extremely intense nature. Even L. Wirth pointed out that this cannot but affect the psychology of the townspeople. The scientific literature describes the modern phenomena of such influence as the loneliness of a person in a city, the marginalization of the urban space, ambiguity of the social security
and control criteria, etc. In an effort to increase the level of the latter, people seek to compensate for this feeling of defenselessness, resorting, for example, to the widespread installation of video surveillance systems, “alarm” buttons, alarms. But whether they give the desired sense of security and how much they relate to comfort is a very controversial issue.

Taking into account the ever-growing growth of the urban population as a global sociocultural trend, we also point out the factor of the ongoing migration of people to cities, and therefore the problems of adaptation and acculturation associated with it. In such conditions, the issues related to the position of a person and groups in the social urban space, their scientific study and comprehension inevitably arise. Accordingly, it is important to study the phenomenon of the marginality of the urban space.

From a sociological point of view, the marginality is considered as a characteristic of a person’s position in the sociocultural space, which is interpreted as intermediate, borderline, indefinite one. The marginality may also be characterized as localization in the social environment, its coordinates of existence and subjective experience of this process as a lack of integrity, comfort of the cultural environment [5], which is particularly unstable and limited in time and space.

The urban marginality is a socio-philosophical reflection of the ambiguous position of a person in the city conditions and its environment, and related issues of the status, cultural, personal order. By and large, we are talking about a person’s comprehension of his place in the current social conditions, his satisfaction with the nature of relations and interactions, general assessment of the vector of his relations with the city. Here you can talk about the general ability to such reflection.

Sociologically obtained information of this kind may be very useful in practical issues related to the planning and design of “smart” urban space, in the development of the projects requiring the involvement of a wide circle of citizens, for stimulating public initiatives in the development of the city and urban economy.

2.3. Features of “the city of our times”

The factors and trends of the modern social situation allow us to talk about the specific development of the urban space, as well as to characterize the social world and the relations of the people emerging within its framework. Thus, I.Yu. Lapova singles out qualitatively new requirements presented to a modern person by the emerging urban reality [5]: 1) an increased degree of social, cultural and economic mobility; 2) changing in the qualitative and quantitative nature of human relations; 3) unification of traditional forms of a family institution; 4) the lack of professional rootedness of the person in the city; 5) freedom of choice, an abundance of the ways to find and lose oneself. As a result, the fragmented nature of the urban world gives rise to a new type of an urban human – an outcast – a ghost human.

The modern socio-philosophical interpretation of this phenomenon directly indicates that in the city the marginal state is becoming prevailing. Moreover, the current sociocultural realities make it possible to point to its functional and, in a certain sense, even its constructive nature. For example, the concept of the post-industrial society made it possible “to see in the urban outcast not the rudiment of the traditional society in a situation of alienation, but the product of social interaction relevant to the situation of a modern city” [6].

In the developed countries, an increasing number of urban residents experience poverty [2], therefore, even a high level of socio-economic development does not mean universal well-being, on the contrary, social inequality in its polar expressions is represented. L. Wakan in the context of the processes taking place in the world focuses on the emergence in the advanced societies of the capitalist West of the “new poverty”, “modernized poverty”, “new urban marginality”. The author considers the new regime of the urban marginality as the result of the influence of four factors: the revival of social inequality that arises against the background of the general economic progress and prosperity; transformation of wage labor (in particular, fragmentation and desocialization of labor); reconstruction of the welfare state (the causes of impoverishment are its contraction and fragmentation); concentration and stigmatization (marginality is concentrated around deprived areas) [7].
The processes of globalization and urbanization lead to the redrawing of the public field of the city, the emergence of other forms of interactions and institutions, adoption of the new value meanings and social facts. Thus, S. Sassen points out that due to globalization a new inequality arises and the middle class disappears; the globalization contributes to the growth of the value of highly skilled workers, mainly in the corporate sector, and the depreciation of other types of economic activity and workers [8].

3. Instead of a conclusion
The authors believe that it is possible to reduce the negative effects of the urban marginality through the formation of a comfortable and accessible urban environment, increasing its overall and aesthetic value in the eyes of the residents, giving it additional value (architectural, historical, informational) meanings. This will contribute to the improvement and harmonization of the relations between the city and residents.

It is important to increase the level of social responsibility of the townspeople, formation of a more serious and responsible attitude towards the city and its objects, especially those directly surrounding them – entrance halls, yards, sidewalks, parking lots for cars, etc. This may be done by more active involvement of people in urban planning and development issues, by developing a system of measures to encourage and stimulate their personal and civic activity (for example, a project grant one), etc. Objectively, the significance of such work is very high, since it meets the priority tasks of the policy of the Russian state. Thus, at present, national projects have been introduced and are being developed, one of which is specifically related to the development and improvement of the urban environment, as well as solving the issues related to housing. At the 3rd World Economic Forum, held in Vladivostok on September 12-14, 2018, the importance of the Federal program for the formation of a comfortable urban environment, the implementation of the municipal program for resettlement from dilapidated housing, a renovation project for the preservation of cultural heritage sites, and program “Safe Quality Roads” was highlighted. In particular, an important task in the context of the topic was announced – to identify the vulnerabilities and work with them through public opinion, and the efficiency of solving this problem was shown by holding the Forum of Urban Communities in Irkutsk city. The experience has shown that the degree of the citizens’ involvement in the discussion is growing, there is a pronounced positive experience in the interaction of the citizens and government structures.

The urban environment today is not only its provision of urban amenities in the traditional sense. This is an expanded set of special services. It is necessary to gradually bring to nought the experience of the industrial type of the city, stimulating innovative approaches to the planning and development of the urban environment. For this they work and bring the results, in particular, the redevelopment program, which includes the tasks of developing social competencies, expanding social cooperation; experience of pilot cities (Voronezh and Vladivostok). Together, the implementation of such programs can give a good synergistic effect, since they are aimed at solving various aspects of one problem situation.

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