Large City Social and Spatial Segregation in Youth’s Opinion

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Abstract. The article deals with the problem of the socio-spatial segregation of the city as the isolation of social groups in the urban space. As human civilization advances, cities are transformed into “dominant types of settlements”, which makes it important to study the phenomena of urban life, including urban social segregation. The major research objective is to analyze the youth’s attitudes toward the city as a space of vital activity and to assess the city space segregation of Yekaterinburg. The research methodology combines qualitative and quantitative methods. Methods of collecting primary data were the questionnaire and in-depth interview. 200 young people were questioned at the age of 18 years and older on the basis of the quota sampling in 2015 in the city of Yekaterinburg. Depths interviews with experts (n=15) are applied on purpose to identify main problems of the topic. The investigation has revealed that the city of Yekaterinburg in Russian youth’s opinion is divided into specific local units: the core and the periphery. At the same time, the periphery is divided into two large zones: industrial quarter and commune of residence which are located in different parts of the urban space. Two thirds of the respondents are satisfied with their area of residence and 30% of the respondents would like to move to the center of the city. The research has fixed the key issues which exist in the city periphery. The majority of uncontrolled parking lots near residential buildings and transport lines congestion are the main issues of commune of residence. Insufficient territory’s cleaning, poor streets lighting and the need for green spaces are the key issues of industrial quarters. The survey has shown that the urban space is divided into three zones: the core (center) with modern buildings of executive housing in which high-income people live, the periphery commune of residence where the middle class lives, and industrial quarters of the periphery where people with lower incomes live. Key words: large city, social and spatial segregation, youth’s opinion, commune of residence, industrial quarters, core

1. Introduction

The analysis of youth’s attitude towards the issue of the city social and spatial segregation as the isolation of social groups in the urban space seem to be a very important aim of sociological analyses, as it may allow the future development to be predicted. Integrated knowledge about the city, its structure and functions, the features of everyday life of the urban population plays a special role in modern society, in the conditions of changing one type of society to another. The city is a set of architectural and engineering infrastructure, originally invented, and then realized by man. The city, developing according to the man’s "plan", changes its creator. A person solves the emerging city issues, evolving and projecting his/her actions in new sociocultural spaces.

Urban sprawl of the planet leads to the emergence of special social systems of connections and relationships that affect the person and his/her life. The city as a complex of multi-level social
phenomenon is characterized by a variety of citizens' activity types, and a special way of life and a life rhythm. Over a hundred years an increasing interest in the concept of city has been observed in professional publications of various scientific disciplines. Quite frequently this subject is investigated in the field of sociology, with majority of publication being of an applied nature. The definitions of city tend to vary, being too wide and often (because of their scope) too general. According to the classics of sociology, the city can be considered as a factor of organic solidarity [1], the foundation of rationality [2]. A city today is both a machine for producing money [3], and a center that produces information [4]. Urban social and spatial segregation is one of the manifestations of the city as a complex phenomenon.

The city's territory is divided into administrative districts, neighborhood units and streets. The social and spatial organization of the city is also determined by the social differences between groups of inhabitants, that is, the segregation of social groups in the urban space. This segregation is of a social nature, because the surrounding space is associated with opportunities and prestige. An important characteristic of this segregation is the concentration of homogeneous groups in certain regions and the formation of a particular urban subculture.

2. Materials and Methods

A city is a mosaic of various social worlds that come in contact and intersect at critical points [5]. In cities there are specific standards of life and special rules of behavior, they form the identity of the individuals [6]. At the same time, social and spatial segregation generates the emergence of various social phenomena such as crimes, divorces, etc. [7]. One can say that, for example, an individual's place of residence (housing) in a certain point of the city determines his/her life chances [8]. Housing, located in different areas of urban space, becomes a factor of social inequality [9].

To a considerable extent the microcosm of urban space affects the socialization of its inhabitants, the formation and development of social networks, health status and everyday communications. Social and spatial segregation can be seen as the division of social groups according to their daily activities.

So, residents of different parts of the city have different places of leisure and different places for their meetings.

When studying the social and spatial segregation of the city, the analysis of the perception of the city division into different zones by its inhabitants is of particular importance. The major research objective is to analyze the youth's attitudes toward the city as a space of vital activity and to assess the city space segregation of Yekaterinburg. The research methodology combines qualitative and quantitative methods. Methods of collecting primary data were the questionnaire and in-depth interview. 200 young people were questioned at the age of 18 years and older on the basis of the quota sampling in 2015 in the city of Yekaterinburg. The survey was conducted in the center of the city, the sample included young people living in different districts. Depths interviews with experts (n=15) are applied on purpose to identify main problems of the topic.

3. Results and discussions

The city of Yekaterinburg, being a transport hub of international, national and interregional scale, is a main economic, cultural and scientific center. The majority of different sectors of economic activity enterprises and the well-developed infrastructure system aimed at ensuring the quality of citizens' life exist in the city. Our research has shown that the majority of the respondents (98%) like the city of Yekaterinburg as a place of living. Meanwhile, the investigation has revealed that the city of Yekaterinburg in Russian youth' opinion is divided into specific local units: the core and the periphery. At the same time, the periphery is divided into two large zones: industrial quarter and commune of residence which are located in different parts of the urban space. Two thirds of the respondents are satisfied with their area of residence and 30% of the respondents would like to move to the center of the city. Residential space location relative to the city core is one of the significant characteristics of the availability of urban environment object. Respondents noted that in the center (in the core) of the city there are more opportunities for education, professional and leisure activities. The
high mobility of young people as a social group is evidenced not only by their willingness to move, but also by the desire of every tenth of the respondents to live outside the city limits. It should be noted that the youth is ready to increase time spent for moving from a place of living to a place of work / study, giving preference to the favorable ecological situation characteristic for the settlements located in a green suburban zone.

Our research has fixed that the respondents notes the existence of a wide range of issues in the area of their residence. Only 4% of the respondents says that there is a lack of shortcomings in their place of living.

The problem areas of the districts, according to the results of the study, are as follows. According to the youth, the center has the least number of claims. The respondents note only one key issue related to the width of the road surface, which entails difficulties in moving vehicles and public transport. The study has fixed that residents with personal cars has one more issue dealing with the availability of parking spaces: "To find a place in the parking lot, I have to come to work 30-40 minutes before the start of working time" (man, 28 years).

Our research has shown that uncontrolled parking lots near residential buildings (88%) and traffic congestion (74%) are the most significant issues for communes of residence. Insufficient housekeeping (78%), poor intensity of illumination (56%), lack of parks, squares, boulevards (green areas) (51%) are the key problems for residents of industrial quarters. It should be noted that our informants noted the same issues of the urban environment. Thus, one of the professors at the Ural Federal University notes that "the city is already" suffocating " of automotive emission , and the road infrastructure is not adapted to such a huge number of road-users".

Despite the fact that the issue of the roads quality is topical, young people note that the city needs to increase the promenade area ("green zones") in the central part of the city: "In the center, trees are cut over for redevelopment, soon there will be one concrete" (woman, 22 years old). It should be noted that the study has considered the issue of the attitude of architects towards urban development: "Today we need to move towards creating the most comfortable conditions for people's lives, meanwhile we are still engaged in urban development rather than provision of urban amenities " (man, 46 years old).

Our survey has fixed that young citizens, when speaking about the core and the periphery, divide the city into sectors in which different groups of population live in terms of income and social status. Thus, there are: the core (center) with modern buildings of executive housing in which high-income people live, the periphery commune of residence where the middle class lives, and the industrial quarters of the periphery where people with lower incomes live. The expert of the Housing Policy Committee of the City Administration asserts that "the process of housing filtration is under way, and the stratification of residential areas into the rich and poor is taking place." The essence of the housing filtration process is the gradual replacement of homeowners, depending on their status and income level. A city dweller with increasing incomes acquires housing in an upsacle residential complex, while his/ her housing is bought by the person who can buy affordable housing. Our research has revealed a continuous redistribution of the housing stock among the population with different income levels, ie income inequality becomes a factor influencing the appropriation of urban space [10].

4. Conclusions

The study has shown that the emergence of social and spatial segregation in Yekaterinburg is recognized by both the youth of the city and by the experts.

Young people consider the city as a place which is divided into specific local units: the core and the periphery. Our research has fixed that in the youth’s opinion the periphery is divided into two large zones: industrial quarter and commune of residence which are located in different parts of the urban space.

The survey has determined a spectrum of issues for each allocated zone. The solution of these issues would allow citizens to present the city in a more favorable perspective. The problem area includes insufficient housekeeping, poor intensity of illumination, lack of parks, squares, boulevards (green areas). These are the key problems for residents of industrial quarters.
Our study has elucidated that the processes of housing filtration, which enhances the processes of social and spatial segregation of the urban environment are going on in the city of Yekaterinburg. It can be considered as a threat to the social sustainability of the city's development [11]. Therefore, municipal administration and administrative apparatus should focus on equalizing opportunities for residents of different districts. Otherwise, social isolation from the cultural, leisure and other spheres of everyday life for some groups of citizens is possible [12].

Our research is a pilot study. In this study, we have attempted to elucidate some specific issues of the large city social and spatial segregation and youth’s attitude towards it. We believe that our findings are promising and should be validated using a larger sample. Further investigation should be devoted to a comparative analysis of the youth’s attitude towards the problems of large city social and spatial segregation in various Russians megalopolises. The analysis of the forecast scenarios of the further development of the city space from the position of localization of different population groups in different territories within the city can be considered as promising. The study has revealed that there is also a need to anticipate the negative phenomena and trends that will be characteristic in a particular urban area.

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