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## **SOCIO-ANTHROPOLOGICAL MODEL OF MODERN URBAN ENVIRONMENT: A HUMAN IN THE CITY, A CITY IN THE HUMAN**

**Abstract:** *A city, its structure and identity can be represented as a theoretic model. There are “key” models of modern cities: servicing, comfortable, compact, “green”, learning, creative, “smart” and social; more individual variants include creative, cultural, sporty, healthy and adaptive cities, cities of opportunities, sustainable development, etc. A city, functioning in line with any of these models, is inseparable from its social culture: historical heritage, traditions, and values. The sociocultural model incorporates the description of real landscape, cultural space and residents’ mentality. Sociocultural models are developed and implemented, for example, for Moscow and St. Petersburg. Ivanovo, Tambov, Sochi, Nizhniy Novgorod, Ekaterinburg, Novosibirsk, and other cities, which models can be found in various studies, are grouped in terms of either resources which need to be managed or depressive economy which needs means of rescue. In both cases the sociocultural model establishment is seen not only as a way to “understand”, but as a way to “do”. A human being creates some space; the city, in its turn, becomes both an opportunity and restriction for humans [N. Terebihin, Yu. Lukin, A. Dregalo, V. Ulyanovsky]. Cities like people may be familiar, favourite, native, strange, tiresome, diverse, businesslike, monotonous and boring. One can become “keen on a city like a person, a city can become ‘someone’s fate’”. According to the average citizen’s perception, each city has a face, character, heart, spirit, belly, profession, friends and enemies, its past, present and future, the fact of being born, the recognition triumph, the process of dying, fate, mission and potential. Most people in the world already live in cities, and “his or her city” lives in each human being. These intangible elements comprise the subjective cultural space of images, meanings and values of particular people, living in objective social and geographical circumstances, i.e. the social anthropological model of a modern city.*

**Keywords:** *social anthropology, city, urban environment, model of town.*

### **Introduction**

A city, its structure and identity, can be represented as a theoretic model. There are “key” models of modern cities: servicing, comfortable, compact, “green”, learning, creative, “smart” and social; more individual variants include creative, cultural, sporty, healthy and adaptive cities, cities of opportunities, sustainable development, etc. A city, functioning in line with any of these models, is inseparable from its social culture: historical heritage, traditions and values.

The sociocultural model incorporates the description of real landscape, cultural space, and residents’ mentality. Sociocultural models are developed and implemented, for example, for Moscow and St. Petersburg. Ivanovo, Tambov, Sochi, Nizhniy Novgorod, Ekaterinburg, Novosibirsk, and other cities, which models can be found in various studies, are grouped in terms of either resources which need to be managed or depressive economy which needs means of rescue. In both cases the sociocultural model establishment is seen not only as a way to “understand”, but as a way to “do”. A human being creates some space; the city, in its turn, becomes both an opportunity and restriction for humans [N. Terebihin, Yu. Lukin, A. Dregalo, V. Ulyanovsky].

## Methodology

Most people in the world already live in cities, and “his or her city” lives in each human being. Cities like people may be familiar, favourite, native, strange, tiresome, diverse, businesslike, monotonous and boring. One can become “keen on a city like a person, a city can become ‘someone’s fate’”. According to the average citizen’s perception, each city has a face, character, heart, spirit, belly, profession, friends and enemies, its past, present and future, the fact of being born, the recognition triumph, the process of dying, fate, mission and potential. These intangible elements comprise the subjective cultural space of images, meanings and values of particular people, living in objective social and geographical circumstances, i.e. the social anthropological model of a modern city.

## Measurement and analysis

The emergence of humans altered the development of the Earth drastically. According to biology, any human being is able to exist exclusively in a group. We can observe development of events in the following sequence: emergence of conditions suitable for living – appearance of humans – the social structure establishment – development of co-residence forms – emergence of rural (hunting and farming) settlements – rural-urban differentiation – the urban lifestyle prevalence – emergence of mass problems related to widespread urbanization – a lack of efficiency when solved by military and political means – social demand for alternative solutions.

Discussing the issue in this way, we can state that a certain environment created humans; humans are inclined to strive for improving the environment conditions of their existence; though a person does not know exactly what conditions will become the best for them, what, in the end, is an amazing paradox.

Once established as a social format, the urban environment gains more and more significance for humankind. Modern models of the urban environment development are discussed by different authors, for instance, A. Musiezdov (2013), D. Frolov, I. Solovieva (2016), etc. The relevance of the ‘urban environment’ phenomenon research is evident, and for the coherent discussion of the suggested social and anthropological model we should clarify the use of the categories involved, such as ‘modern’, ‘city’ and ‘space’.

Historical models of cities are interesting to study in terms of flawed decisions and assertions made by others but, in fact, they are practically inadmissible for reincarnation, since new reality sets new targets.

The city is different from the village in categorical terms; a large number of cities grew on the basis of rural settlements, except for new monotowns. Today villages can still become cities, whereas cities do not turn into villages.

Any city is an object in space and cannot be concentrated at one point or within a small area. On the other hand, extensive expansion is a feature of the urban development model absence and, in general, signals emerging problems (for example, in the ‘slum urbanization’ phenomenon). Therefore, space is a relevant feature of the definition of city. A successfully developing city would have a well-designed space.

Today people are not aware of the alternative to the urban lifestyle. A return (specifically, return, reversion, escape) to the rural lifestyle is evidently intended to impress. The study of the social and cultural village model conducted, for example, by V. Matonin and focused on the northern village model development is an innovation (V. Matonin, 2013). Life conditions in a particular rural area can be improved and local population can be retained temporarily, but the fundamental widespread prevalence of urban dwellers over rural ones proves the fact that the world’s population has made its choice in favour of cities, and this fact should be accepted.

As stated before, humans tend to improve their life conditions. We can observe the following typical social adaptive trajectories: creating a microcommunity (love, relationships, work), getting harmonized with a mesacommunity (education, culture, science) and adjusting to a

macrocommunity (politics, authorities, society). They will be considering in the continuum on the basis of such conditions as humans, cities and today.

What does it mean to ‘love one’s city’? Is it really possible to ‘love’ inanimate objects within a city sincerely, such as a stone building, a cast-iron fence, or an asphalt road? Marble, steel and concrete structures may, possibly, be aesthetic or unique, but they lack an essential quality: a mutual reaction to us that we call human relationships and what we search for in love. It turns out that we love not a bridge, a clock or a lamp post, but our memories and relation to them. By changing their attitude to what is happening in the city, people change its environment.

One should work hard for positive changes to happen. It is always more challenging to create something than to destroy something. If the city provides employment, it means that there is life in it; if the number of jobs is growing, the city has the future. The social and economic features of northern cities are analyzed in economists and sociologists’ works, for example, by A. Dregalo, V. Ulyanovsky (2011), I. Lavrova (2016).

We remember every city in which we have once lived, worked or loved. Everyday life, daily work and human life come, take place and finish in a specific urban context, and the city as a transcendental phenomenon contributes objectively to our life more often than a tropical rainforest, a mountain peak or a farm field. Here we should confine ourselves to the assertion that characteristics of the microcommunity depend on a person, in contrast to the macrocommunity (‘people cannot choose times, they live and die in them’). A person likes his or her city when he or she likes this city in him/herself, cares about this relationship, develops and supports it, therefore, makes concrete practical actions: knows the native city’s history, respects other citizens, maintains relations with others, starts a family, communicates with friends, creates the microenvironment, plants trees and, finally, clears up the litter.

The main source of successful social adaptation of people to the urban environment is, undoubtedly, the level of personal culture. A person, who has an opportunity to receive the so-called good education, abilities to master a particular curriculum and the intention to do so, has a less destructive power. Being a member of the education system (for example, studying in a higher educational establishment) a citizen is busy reading course books and writing abstracts. Accessible, widespread and popular education is, undoubtedly, one of the most positive elements, contributing to the successful development of the urban environment model.

The objective characteristic of a specific city is the number of educational and cultural organizations, as well as sports and leisure centres functioning in it. Not every village has, for example, a library, the cinema or a swimming pool at their disposal. If we mention a theatre or an institute describing some settlement, then it becomes clear that we definitely refer to a city. Judging by the number of theatres (libraries, monuments, public gardens, etc.) we can understand the size of the city in question. The more educational and cultural facilities it has, the larger the city is.

In this context, though, it is essential for us to understand that the opposite relation may not always be true. A large city may not have enough museums, exhibitions and other cultural facilities, though one should note that the older the city is, the more various and advanced its cultural urban environment is; the city’s cultural context is growing and developing with age. Consequently, the ‘death’ of a city as a social object starts from decline in the cultural sphere: theatres are closed down, the number of educational organizations is decreased, library budget is reduced. These statements may be perceived as banal, but it is surprising how seldom these indicators are recognized as a guide for action and political decisions to develop the urban environment which needs preservation (development).

The city authorities are a sphere which the city residents cannot influence to the full extent. At least, it is typical for the current situation in Russia. Citizens in authority should definitely possess such leading drivers as love for the native city, willingness to preserve its history and take action to create the common well-being in the future. The macrocommunity of a particular city consists of an endless number of citizens’ microcommunities. Improving legal and cultural

awareness of a particular citizen significantly contributes to the local macrocommunity enhancement. It is surprising that ordinary people are unaware of it.

So, today the city is a major format of human residence. A person dwelling in the city has more opportunities, lives longer and varied life. Migration from a village to a city is facilitated by at least two main factors: lack of employment and leisure opportunities. Therefore, improving leisure opportunities can positively influence the social well-being of citizens in a radical way.

Unlike nature, a city is quickly and inevitable destroyed if there are no people in it, and its territory returns to the original natural state. Cities depend on humans in every sense of the word, though city dwellers, on the contrary, are used to consider themselves to be dependent on cities.

So, the theoretical social and anthropological model of the modern urban space can incorporate the objective urban environment (architecture and landscape), objective and subjective features of population (size, age and gender characteristics, occupation, political views, etc.) and purely subjective mentality (traditions, values, meanings). For instance, some philosophical studies present the results of examining the genesis, semantics and structure found in the European North geocultural space (N. Terebikhin, 2011).

In this context a city, as well as a human respondent, may be described as the study subject. A city has its age (or can 'hide' it when the exact foundation date is impossible to ascertain), 'gender' ('Father Rostov, Mother Odessa'), 'occupation' (industrial, trade, tourist, etc.), 'language' (including the native language, dialect, accent), 'character' (amiable, boring, bustling, distrustful, pragmatic, etc.), and 'views' (pagan, Orthodox, Muslim, etc.). Undoubtedly, any city has a 'head' (the administration), a 'heart' (for example, the historic centre), 'clothes' (an architectural style), an intangible 'soul', its past, present and future. We assess cities like people, by their wealth, educational and cultural level, reputation and prospects.

The social modeling process includes checking the model's topicality. We are examining the probable social anthropological model of such a city as Arkhangelsk. Arkhangelsk is an old (the year of foundation is 1584), large (350 thousand residents) coastal port city (the distance to the White Sea and, hence, the Arctic Ocean is about 30 km), which stretches along the Northern Dvina river for around 40 kilometres.

Working at the 'social portrait' of Arkhangelsk, we found out that the typical resident is a woman, middle aged and older, as a rule, having one or two children, living together with a partner or divorced, educated, atheist, even-tempered, sociable, with low income and, generally, not satisfied with her life quality. The prevailing attitude to the future of Arkhangelsk is sceptical. Being of strategic importance for the country, the population of Arkhangelsk in general continues to age and decline; the economically active part of the population leaves for other territories, despite the region's needs. According to the similar studies of other regions, one of major reasons for permanent migration of young educated people of the working age is not poverty or harsh climate, but social gap (E. Putintsev, 2005). It is evident that this situation is paradoxical for this particular Russian city with its old history, unique traditional culture, located not only at the state's border, but at the cultural crossroads as well.

It is not known whether there is integrated prospective social cultural model for Arkhangelsk. The city is characterized by some evident contradictions: the rich historical past and ongoing strategic significance, given the low quality of life and unclear prospects. The past of Arkhangelsk is relatively well studied, its present is understudied, and its future is doubtful. Many young people do not associate the city's future with their own (the social youth project 'My Life When I Retire', N. Bobyleva, 2011-2016).

Arkhangelsk is viewed as the social and cultural object that faces economic, demographic and resource-related problems. The problems are manifested in the absence of sophisticated symbols, outdated or becoming obsolete brands, significant problems with the image and identity (for example, Arkhangelsk is confused with Astrakhan, whereas Astrakhan is never confused with Arkhangelsk). Meanwhile, Arkhangelsk has its own, still undervalued resources for branding. For example, Arkhangelsk is the only city in the former USSR and modern Russia

which has retained a distinctly religious (Orthodox, to be more exact) name. Numerous attempts to develop this name concept can be found in the discussion about the name for the new Cathedral of Archangel Michael (2005), in materials related to the discussion of the exact date of Arkhangelsk foundation (Yu. Lukin, 2013), a public protest against the official use of the anti-historical ‘arkhangeltsy’ (the self-designation being ‘arkhangelogorodtsy’) (source: regional media, 2018).

This research can be further developed by comparing and contrasting the subcultural environment of Arkhangelsk with cities and towns in the east, the west and the south of Russia, and may result in developing the integrated social anthropological model of the northern city, based on the studies of the social and cultural spheres in Arkhangelsk.

### Conclusion

To conclude, cities represent the most widespread contemporary and realistic future format of dwelling for the majority of people. The main social features of the urban lifestyle, except traditional criteria (high rise housing, non-agricultural employment, etc.), include the presence of real and symbolic spaces. It is possible to develop a philosophical theoretical model, which should be based on city dwellers’ needs and opportunities. This model can reasonably be defined as social anthropological. It is based on the idea that every person’s consciousness reflects the environment around. The personal image of the city is created in each person’s consciousness. All possible images merge into one big picture, not coinciding with reality, but defining it, nevertheless. The content of a specific city image can be identified and expressed in the theoretical social anthropological (i.e. based on subjective beliefs and perspectives of some people) model. It seems evident that generalizing models of several northern towns and cities can result in developing the theoretical model of a ‘northern city in general’, therefore, identifying ways to achieve some stable well-being for cities.

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