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URBAN ENVIRONMENT FOR YOUTH COMMUNICATION: CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND SOCIAL PRACTICES

Nadezhda Sidorenko (a), Nadezhda Sokolova (b), Nadezhda Sivrikova (b)*, Vyacheslav Musatov (c), Stanislav Musatov (c)

*Corresponding author

(a) Department of national history and law, South Ural State Humanitarian Pedagogical University, 69, Lenin prospect, 454080, Chelyabinsk, Russia

(b) Department of Social Work, Pedagogy and Psychology, South Ural State Humanitarian Pedagogical University, 69, Lenin prospect, 454080, Chelyabinsk, Russia, bobronv@cspu.ru

(c) Center for Patents and Inventions, South Ural State Humanitarian Pedagogical University, 69, Lenin prospect, 454080, Chelyabinsk, Russia

Abstract

The article presents a study of the judgments of young people of the capital of Southern Ural (Chelyabinsk) on the quality of the city public space for their communication and recreation. Also, the possibilities of the influence of young people on the policy on the improvement of the urban environment are discussed. The results of the study confirmed the hypothesis of a gap between the high need of children and adolescents for independent and active interpersonal communications and the quality of improvement of urban public space. It was found that 20.3% of young people consider the condition of their yards unsatisfactory for communication purposes, 14.4% would like to change their home and yard. Young residents of the city are partially satisfied with the number and quality of places of mass recreation. More than half of them (55.5%) include 3-5 objects located, mainly in the city center, among the sufficiently equipped zones. They all have a green zone. The results of the study revealed the low awareness of young people about the Federal Project "Urban Environment" (45%) and its implementation (19.5%). A low level of readiness of respondents for active activities on improvement of near-ground areas has been established. This is due to the lack of relevant experience of some of them (35%). The results of the study make it possible to formulate recommendations to municipal bodies on improving urban planning policies and using the potential of social activity, including youth urban activity.

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Keywords: Interpersonal communications, urban activity, urban public space, youth.



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1. Introduction

Modern Russian society characterizes a rather high level of urbanization. According to Rosstat, the share of the urban population is 74% of the total population of Russia ('Population of Russia: number, dynamics, statistics', n.d.). Urban space is dynamic and acts as the main external environment. It actively affects the life of modern man. The city creates opportunities for broad mutual communication and building forms of collective life on its basis. On the other hand, the development of new technological means of communication in unity with globalization processes leads to the information supersaturation of residents in megacities. The consequence of this situation is transformations in the structure of interpersonal communication, mechanization, growth of inter-groups of exclusion and separation. Researchers note that children began to move less because of their passion for the Internet and information technologies: computer games and social networks displace mobile street games and live communication. Active children's mobility is also affected by the inability of urban public spaces, in particular the filling of available free areas (e.g. near-home spaces) by road and others (Averin, 2019). At the same time, the greater inclusion of young people in the Internet space gives them the opportunity to see the standard of living in developed countries. People develop perceptions of high standards of comfort in the living environment, which often conflict with the environment. This situation updates the study of the problem of the interpersonal communicative space of young people in the urban environment as a significant criterion of the "comfort" of the urban environment. In this article, an analysis of the degree of comfort of urban public space in young residents of Chelyabinsk - a city with a population of more than a million people - was undertaken. The definition as a social group of research of children and youth of Chelyabinsk is motivated by the importance of this subject of urban life from the perspective of the development of the city. The proportion of children in the population of the city corresponds to the average data for the Chelyabinsk region - 19.2%; The median age of the city is 34.9 years.

The hypothesis of the study is the assumption of a gap between the high need of children and teenagers in Chelyabinsk in independent and active interpersonal communications and the quality of improvement of the urban environment necessary for this purpose. The purpose of this article is to study and describe the ideas of the youth of Chelyabinsk about the adaptation of the city public space to the development of interpersonal communications.

Tasks:

- To study the perception of young people of the importance of urban public space (residence yard and places of mass recreation) in interpersonal communications.
- To determine the degree of satisfaction with the improvement of the space of interpersonal communication by children and young people.
- To identify the level of influence of children and young people on social policy for the improvement of urban public space.

2. Problem Statement

Sociological ideas of Bourdieu (2007), Zimmel (2018) etc. became a methodological basis for this study, introduced the concept of city space as a "sociological fact" which denotes the place of connection of heterogeneous spiritual elements and city-specific social ties.

The concept of urban public spaces (UPS) is developed on the basis of the principle of interdisciplinary. Its issues are addressed in studies on urbanization, social sciences, social psychology, and others. The concept of urban public spaces within urbanization means spaces available to people that are most often open grounds, free from but not limited to buildings (Capanema Alvares, 2018).

In the 2000s, attention increased to the study of the social aspect of UPS, which is referred to as the "third place" in human life after home and place of work (study) (Oldenburg, 2018).

Capanema Alvares and Barbosa (2018) formulated the main non-exhaustive dimensions of it - socio-ecological, socioeconomic, sociocultural and political-administrative and their relationship with external dimension taking into account their intersectoral nature. Researchers focus on day-to-day policies related to citizens' right to UPS. The authors come to the view that urban UPS will be 1) more environmentally significant, provided they are green; 2) economically significant when applying specific infrastructure on them or placing on the main real estate plots; 3) culturally significant when they will be related to the identity of citizens, and socially significant, provided they facilitate the creation or support of the public sphere of the city.

According to Eckardt and Sánchez (2015), the development of the UPS concept is currently being updated in connection with the situation of the "city crisis" caused by the consequences of a number of political reasons and the globalization of the economy. The author notes the reduction of the public space of cities in Europe and other continents in the logic of political innovation and institutional transformation of recent decades. This phenomenon, referred to as "strict urbanism", is regarded by the author as a "conflict of spatial urban planning".

Sevilla-Buitrago (2018) describes the current situation with the privatization of public space and the situation with the transition of socially important institutions to private administration as a "destructive" component of neoliberalization of urban planning. They are contrasted with "progressive urbanism," supported by civic initiative, planners, the non-profit sector, and a number of scholars with democratic views. Bringing public demands to power and relevant government programs is the task of these actors. An important step forward is to develop a compelling discourse in support of new forms of urbanism.

D'Onofrio and Trusiani (2018) emphasize the activism of civic initiatives in the approach to the UPS concept. The authors note the positive practice of North American cities in this regard. It shows that urban planning is largely based on local initiatives, thanks to the close interaction between the authorities and civil society. Society assumes responsibility for the city's living space, initiating projects aimed at vital interests.

A significant focus in the UPS concept is on issues related to health policy. D'Onofrio and Trusiani (2018), as part of a study of urban planning of European cities, formulated a problem that was given a fundamental character. It is a problem of maintaining a balance between health policy and urban planning. The way to solve it was a dialogue between various players - professionals and health workers, urban planners, politicians and the civil community. The role of the central (national) government at the legislative

level was highlighted. Italian scientists D'Onofrio and Trusiani (2018) have updated the problem of parks and green spaces strategy in the development of UPS policy. The problem of "bicycle urbanism", "walking roads" is widely discussed within the framework of UPS (Sunarti et al., 2019).

Publications address UPS issues in a socio-environmental approach aspect on extensive material from France, Italy, the United States, New Zealand, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Burkina Faso. The authors explore urban microclimate issues in the context of architectural and urban design. They emphasize their social and cultural significance, with particular attention to urban public spaces (Roesler & Kobi, 2018).

3. Research Questions

Problems of urban planning, UPS in the life of children and teenagers are increasingly raised in the research of social psychology related to the study of issues of growing up of children in cities. Issues of children's independent mobility are the most typical in this topic.

UPS-related issues act as an aspect of environmental psychology research. Researchers note the positive impact of well-equipped UPS in the process of socialization of children (Webb Jamme et al., 2018). Special attention is paid to the effects of the green part of UPS. The results of a large-scale study show that familiarity with nature is related to the best affective and behavioral self-regulation of children (Weeland et al., 2019). Dopko et al. (2019) note that "children largely benefit from spending time in nature," including green UPS areas. Greenwood and Gatersleben (2016), in a publication with the corresponding title "Let's go for a walk!" formulate the results of a study of the conditions of recovery from stress and mental fatigue of adolescents. Researchers note that walking with friends in the open air significantly increases the positive effect, compared to resting indoors, alone or while playing in mobile phones.

Domestic research on urban public space issues in the life of young people is based on the achievements of foreign researchers taking into account national specificities (Fiupova et al., 2018).

Averin (2011), one of the indicators of the quality of life of children in the city, identifies "places of residence as a children's territory of development." It updates the practical solution of the issue of the creation of open public spaces in modern Russian cities with the allocation of children's places.

At the same time, Russian research on this issue is few. They have a geographical approach, including mainly the cities of the Far East and St. Petersburg. This is due to the small number of specialists in the field and the geography of their residence (Beschasnaya, 2016; Filipova et al., 2016; Sukhushina et al., 2017).

Thus, the theoretical and practical significance of the problem requires further study, including through a "geographical approach" containing the potential for comparisons and generalizations of empirical material.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to study and describe the ideas of the youth of Chelyabinsk (Russian Federation) about the adaptation of the city public space to the development of interpersonal communications.

5. Research Methods

The main method of research was a sociological survey among children and young people of Chelyabinsk in June 2019. In order to determine the degree of satisfaction with the urban environment (comfortable) living for the purposes of interpersonal communications. The sample of the study is the quota, the type of sample is random. The structure of the study group (N = 118 persons) by sex, age and activity are presented in Table 1.

Table 01. Selection of a research (n=118)

| Type Of Activity | | | | Age | | | | Sex | |
|-------------------|---|---|----------------------|----------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-------|
| Pupils of schools | students of higher education institutions | the working youth | | Up to 14 | 15-18 | 19-23 | 23-30 | female | male |
| | | graduates of secondary special education institutions | university graduates | | | | | | |
| 58.5% | 21.2% | 6.9% | 16.1% | 21% | 37.3% | 22.3% | 16.9% | 66.9% | 33.1% |

The investigation procedure is a survey in the form of a face-to-face questionnaire.

The following empirical indicators were used to measure the satisfaction of young people with the urban environment in Chelyabinsk for interpersonal communications: Assessment by respondents of the importance of urban environment (comfortable) living in the interpersonal communication system; Assessment by respondents of existing barriers in the use of the urban environment in interpersonal communications; Assessment by respondents of the quality of the established "public space" of the city (recreation areas, green areas, etc.) as a space of interpersonal communications; Assessment of the impact of children and young people on social policies to improve the urban environment.

6. Findings

Based on the survey conducted, it was revealed that more than half of respondents position their yard as a place significant for meetings with peers and friends. However, the barrier to its use as a territory of interpersonal communications is its lack of capacity. To the question: "will you be comfortable spending some time with a guest from another city or country in your yard?" - 37.3% of respondents answered negatively ("our yard is better not to show"), 44.1% - allows an only short-term stay in it and only 18.6% - considers it worthy to use the territory of the yard as a place of meetings for communication and walks.

A clarification question to the definition of respondents "perception of the quality (comfort) of near-ground territory as a space of interpersonal communications, was the proposal to rate it on a five-point scale. Analysis of the answers allowed to identify the following representations of children and youth of Chelyabinsk: the largest group was made up of those who estimated the quality of improvement of the yard by "satisfactory" (43.2%). Only 19.5% of respondents rated "good" for the improvement of the yard; Rating "excellent" - 2.5% (3 people out of 118). A fifth (20.3%) of young people rated the condition of their yards as "unsatisfactory." They are joined by another group of respondents who would like to move from a residence and a yard in which they do not want to live (14.4%). Thus, the number of unsatisfactory ratings

of the quality of yard improvement is consistent with the perceptions of the main barrier in the possibility of using the yard as an interpersonal communication territory (34.7% and 37.3 respectively).

In the situation of incomplete satisfaction of young people with the comfort of the near-city territory as a space of interpersonal communications, the importance of "public space" (green areas, places of mass rest) in this city increases. The survey showed that the majority of young people (55.5%) consider 3-5 objects located, mainly in the city center, to be sufficiently equipped areas of "public space." These include the Y. Gagarin Park of Culture and Recreation; square Scarlet field; The territory of Kirov Street in the center of the city, the Pushkin city garden and the square around the monument of I.V. Kurchatov at the base of the central avenue of the city - Lenin Avenue. A critical group of young respondents, with 23.7%, allocates only 1-2 seats; optimistic (15.2%) - 6-8 revenge. A small number of respondents (2.5%) see 9-12 well-equipped places of rest, more than 12 well-equipped places in the city see 0.8% of respondents.

A study of respondents' perceptions of the practice of local authorities and self-government in the improvement of yards revealed various judgments. Only a fifth of young people (19.5%) indicated serious improvement of their yards and near-home area in 2018. 13.6% of respondents noted that works on improvement of the yard were carried out 2-3 years ago. One third of respondents (31.4%) noted that such works were carried out more than 2-3 years ago. 35.6% of respondents could not remember that such works were carried out.

Thus, according to the majority of respondents (67%) - serious works on improvement of their yards and near-house territory in the last 2-3 years were not carried out.

The identification of respondents' experience of social practices related to the improvement of near-ground areas was based on respondents' responses on the types of participation in the relevant area of activity. The results of the survey are shown in Table 2.

Table 02. Experience of social practice in the improvement of near-ground areas

| № | Type of social practice | % |
|---|---|------|
| 1 | Subbotnik* for the improvement of the yard | 39.8 |
| 2 | Gardening of the yard | 16.1 |
| 3 | Assistance in the construction and repair of playgrounds | 3.4 |
| 4 | Participated in the discussion of the plan for repair of playgrounds | 9 |
| 5 | There is no practice | 34.7 |
| 6 | Would like to take part in the improvement of near-ground areas in the future | 44.2 |

* Subbotnik is the day when residents of Russian cities volunteer to sweep up and tidy the streets

According to Table 2, more than half of respondents among children and adolescents (65.3%) participated in some way in the improvement of yards and near-house territory. However, one-third of respondents have no experience of social practice in the improvement of near-home areas.

In this situation, it is important to determine the reasons for readiness for this type of activity in the future. The results of the survey are shown in Table 3.

Table 03. Experience of social practice in the improvement of near-ground areas

| № | Type of social practice | % |
|----------|---|----------|
| 1 | Ready to offer ideas and implement them | 16.1 |
| 2 | Ready to help implement existing projects | 22.9 |
| 3 | Can offer useful ideas | 11 |
| 4 | You may think, there will be ideas - I will participate | 45.8 |
| 5 | There is no desire | 4.2 |

The data of Table 3 show the low readiness of respondents in general for active activities on the improvement of near-ground areas. The largest group in this subgroup of reviewers were those who needed more time to reflect on the issue.

The obtained data allow drawing a conclusion on the level of involvement of children and youth of Chelyabinsk in the social practice of improvement of the living environment at the level of the first three stages of activity on the scale of Hart (1992).

This level is lower than the indicators of European activity of children (Gavin, 2009).

7. Conclusion

The study showed that children and young people of Chelyabinsk, experiencing an acute shortage of interpersonal communicative space. They are extremely limited in their ability to influence urban improvement policies.

Respondents have little experience of social practices related to the improvement of near-home areas due to age and insufficient attention to youth initiatives in social policy and practice of local authorities and self-government of Chelyabinsk. Almost half of the respondents said that they were not ready for direct practical participation in this type of social practice, that they did not have any ideas of their own to develop (improve) yards.

The study showed the relevance of the problem and the insufficiency of working with children and young people to develop positive attitudes on active social practice. The results of the study make it possible to recommend that municipalities and youth organizations intensify their efforts to involve children in decisions affecting them. Such work can be carried out using tools such as school boards, youth parliaments, support for project activities of children and young people in this field.

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