RUSSIAN REGIONS THROUGH SOCIOLOGICAL PRISM

Representations in the social space of the region

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Abstract. This article studies the urgent issues of applying the social space theory to regional sociological research. Representation space along with the semantic structure expresses the symbolic and substantive aspects of the region's topology. This article aims to understand the essence and factors of social states, relations, and the spatial development dynamics using representations and comparing traditional and new practices. The uniqueness of this approach lies in analyzing the problems which occur when shaping a sociological approach to ideological, economic, social, and cultural practices and technologies, aimed at influencing the public consciousness in social, communicational, informational, discursive, and other representative contexts. The author evaluates communities' changes by applying the social space theory and social topology as a methodological approach for studying social reality (which includes its conditions' dynamics, features of urban and rural settlements, as well as ethnic and sociocultural processes). The current interpretations of representation cover a range of meanings, including representations or images, reproductions of a presentation, its repetition, and substitution. Representation, therefore, serves as an ideal object, since it interacts with the process of social communications in reproducing the structure of repetitions. Methodological interpretations of representation are numerous as they employ a wide spectrum of many "topological" interpretations of social phenomena in the regional life. Regional representation materializes in different versions of social space and identifies regional interaction as a close semantic connection, acting as an important condition for the society's integration and consolidation.

Keywords: representation space, region, representations, social space, social construction, social methodology, social technologies, social topology.

INTRODUCTION

Representation is a term borrowed from Old French *representacion* and directly from Latin *representationem* meaning "image, depiction, delineation, presentation, characterization, description". Representations are numerous. Researchers associate their formation and development with the development of the cognitive process through revolutions (cognitive, informational, cultural, scientific, spatial, technological, and managerial), as well as many other factors influencing the development of representations during social change. Representativeness in sociology is an indicator of statistical observations. One form of representation is common sense; it focuses on a system of "life-rooted" inner convictions, rejecting the encroachment of radicalism on life and its values. Common sense implies the rejection of the categorical nature of certain judgments and the rejection of illusions, for example, in an attempt to take any particular fragment of a holistic phenomenon for an aggregate of the multiplicity of elements. Common sense opposes various kinds of radicalism, such as opposition which restrains other oppositions aimed at the establishment of certain ideals. Representations always characterize difference.

Representations are extensively used in regional studies. They are obligatory in characterizing social processes, social problems, and spatial forms in organizing regional and territorial systems, forms of social control in income distribution, redistribution and change of property rights, cultural dynamics, social justice, quality of life, ethnic identity, media practices, virtualization of social space and other aspects in the spatial organization of regional society.

This article analyzes the space theory application in regions and employs such methods and techniques as theory construction, constellation, and typology in macro- and microanalysis of the dynamics of social space in the study of various social problems.

MAIN PART

The development of sociology of space is included in a number of priority research areas [10, p. 4]. Sociology of space is relevant for the humanities and social sciences: philosophy, culture studies, psychology, social geography, ecology, anthropology, economics, and law. It is no less significant for social medicine, architecture and other scientific disciplines. The choice of theoretical preferences of sociological science is closely connected with a broad appeal to the problems of meaning, representation, and practice. On the basis of these categories, the conceptualization of the theory of social space takes place. An important place in this process occupies the development of the problems of the regionalization of social life, the transformation and localization of communications, along with the development of other areas of research. As G. S. Batygin wrote:

> "Theories can be strong and weak. A strong theory contains more proven hypotheses than a weak theory. If the number of refuted hypotheses becomes significant, the theory, despite resistance, dies" [4, p. 109].

The theory of social space has acquired the status of a strong theory. The most important condition for gaining this status is the employment of scientific methods for the representation of social cognition.

Social properties and qualities of space became the subject of scientific discussions at the turn of the 19th-20th centuries. C. Schmitt emphasized the importance of "changing the conceptual field" of social sciences, which was realized by F. Ratzel, who formulated creative possibilities in the development of social values and meanings in connection with the topic of the "living space of society". These possibilities were implemented with the help of achievements in mathematics, physics, and biology, as well as the humanities, in the process of the scientific revolution of space [31, p. 563]. This revolution resulted in the formation of social topology as a special trend in the modern methodology of social sciences, which received an impetus to development in the process of the scientific revolution of space. The basis of this is the theory of social space, which describes the structures, statics, and dynamics of society at global, regional and local levels, specifies the mechanisms of paradigmatic schemes of spatial and territorial development.

The thesaurus of sociology of space includes: G. Simmel's ideas about the properties and qualities of space, M. Weber's ideas about the world of meaningful action, E. Husserl's and M. Heidegger's ideas about perception of life and perception of the world. Philosophers of the 19th-20th centuries agreed that the space where a person finds his place and understands his/her inner self is his/her world. This world is a social reality in which language is, according to Heidegger, the "home of one's being" [6, p. 152]. Representation is a fundamental operation of cognitive activity and human perception. Methodological interpretation of representation acquires "mathematical" interpretation in G. Leibniz's monadology, but it is especially focused on E. Husserl's phenomenology, which actualizes the concept of "intentionality" [13]. M. Heidegger's philosophy developed the phenomenological project of "intentionality". The German scientist compared the relationship of presentation and representation, linking them with the fact of presence. M. Vartovsky interprets representation as an operation rooted in history and culture as a phenomenon of "visual understanding" and thinking [33]. In social epistemology, representations act as intermediaries — models of symbolic, linguistic, logical, and mathematical systems. The use of various representations is associated with the modeling of certain types of values.

Philosophers traditionally regarded representations as phenomena present in one's consciousness, in the knowledge of certain material and ideal objects used in cognitive procedures. The problem of representations is extremely relevant when considering properties, relations and processes in the context of social events mediated through "image" and language, through symbolic systems and sign models. Scientific knowledge carried out by means of representation is based on the categories of "state", "event", "space", "time" and is widely used in modern social sciences.

An important link in the development of the idea of representation as a form of the humanities and social sciences is M. M. Bakhtin's theory. In the late 1920s, the

philosopher referred to the terms *hybrid construction* and *dual social orientation*; he made conclusions from the standpoint of sociological poetics. M. Bakhtin identified the following basic elements in the image of a person: "alien consciousness", re-creation of "self-developing idea (inseparable from personality) in a human event", "dialogue" as a special form of interaction between equal and equivalent consciousnesses" [2, 3]. This concept has become one of the most important ones in understanding the role of social representations. The scientist continued to develop the idea of a hybrid construction of language and meaning in a number of other works.

These ideas are developed in modern authors' studies. A. S. Akhiezer introduces a model of the formation of "hybrid moral ideals", which performs an integrative function in situations where heterogeneous ideals are perceived in the interpretation of "different groups", acting as a single unity, although having a number of differences [1, p. 256]. A positive meaning of the hybrid ideal is the ability to form the space of an "abstract unity" that preserves the perspective of the integration process. Hybrids of this kind are formed in the process of spontaneous thinking and act as representative forms of world understanding. The author describes the "form of the logic of thinking" in culture and action, which constitutes a dual opposition with respect to inversion, in which mediation serves to absolutize one side of polarity and minimize the value of the other [1, p. 859]. In this construct, the object and subject of social knowledge have the properties of duality, where the "real product" is represented by a variety of positions, relationships and interactions. The hypostasis of this product is representation as a kind of on-screen reality, the subject of "pure theorizing" created in thought. Reflected in scientific discourse, it expresses "the world in itself" and "the world for us", it is not always clearly marked but is recognized and delimited in the established traditions, approaches, and studies.

Analysis of the morphological properties of social space as a complex multifaceted phenomenon in the form of representations is presented in the works by V. V. Ilyin, L. A. Mikeshina and other authors [14-17, 24]. L. A. Mikeshina characterizes representation as a "social event" [24, p. 109]. V. V. Ilyin notes that the form, in philosophical and methodological terms, has a structural organization in which the content is organized systematically and expressed in a "set of stylistic principles", including praxeology, which includes various practices [17, p. 108]. These are also symbolic representations, where symbols appear as powerful spiritual resources that allow you to create different worlds by the power of imagination and are combined by the power of images. They express a figurative imitation in disclosing the mystery of "sense-generating morphogenesis" [17, p. 95].

It should be emphasized that representations enter into any area of knowledge through various symbolic systems:

> "together, these phenomena form "phase space" that characterizes an altered state of the social space of modern society. The consolidation of axiological and semantic fields is determined by the material problem of benefit and property,

the spiritual problem of freedom, justice, and responsibility. The semantic configuration of the communication spaces of modern society allows us to consider spaces of freedom, control, dialogue, play and struggle as social substantive "braces", the analysis of which is associated with the use of special procedures within the framework of sociological measurements of social space parameters" [29, p. 662].

V. V. Ilyin characterizes the problems of cognitive representation in the aspect of representational activity from the standpoint of the degree of freedom (in reformatting the structure of the world); productivity (in building semantic and figurative potencies); metaphor; supra-logicality (symbolic allegory, meaningful allegoric shapes); disinhibition (through symbolic self-expression) [17, p. 78]. The author associates representativeness with the activation of possessiveness (as an exhaustive search of opportunity), game (as improvisation), convention (as spontaneous representation) [17, p. 79]. V. V. Ilyin connects the spontaneous determination of the action with distinctive, activity related, demonstrative positionality, which, in turn, is associated with the ability to view and change topics from unexpected positions. He considers the question of coordination of positions within the framework of visual representation, eidetic representation, and transformation from "mimesis to poiesis", i.e. intellectual catharsis [17, p. 79].

V. V. Ilyin characterizes two parameters of meaning and reference. As the author notes, in the symbolic symbiosis, there is a birth of additional meanings—the merging of "logic with sensus", the binding of diverse information and the emergence (by combining) of new conceptual unities [16, p. 91]. The sign as a representative of a subject in the theory of symbolic forms (represented in the tradition of logical atomism) means a certain object or phenomenon. In social mediation there is a combination of signs, meanings in their generation, circulation, translation, implantation, which all focus on the social life of the subject—object (reality). This is a world in which a person, being an expedient being, masters reality from the point of view of embodied values, goals, and interests [14, p. 111]. In this process, the region is an important link in the objective representation of social space.

Representation emerged as a form of sociological knowledge in the last quarter of the 20th century. Its wide application in sociology is connected with the conversion of research to the theory of social representations. Its author, a French sociologist S. Moscovici, views representation as a procedure of social cognition within the framework of the difference between explanatory cognition of common sense and descriptive cognition of science [25-27]. He substantiated this by the fact that common sense successfully performs adaptive and regulatory functions in the behavior of people, various groups, and communities. His theory of social representations is based on the "conceptual scheme of forming a system of values and personal meanings of subjects in the course of social interactions". The active role of social representations is determined by measurements of their states, and on the basis of a wide use of representations, a methodology of social cognition is built, in which the subject is the world, social space. Representations encompass

language, sign, symbol, construction of social reality, as well as other phenomena associated with interpretation of the presentation as a subject of methodological study in sociology.

The idea of representation found application in the treatise by P. Berger and T. Luckmann "The social construction of reality". The authors characterize the representation of institutions "in roles and through roles" on which all other representations depend. According to D. Durkheim, this process of "interconnection" is presented within the frame of integration and solidarity [5]. According to A. Schutz, this approach is based on the vision of everyday reality of the world [30]. This idea is also associated with K. Mannheim's concept [23, p. 409]. Thus, stereotyping is viewed as a means of "its own embedding" in the living space—"the space of nature".

Ideas about representation occupy an important place in Pierre Bourdieu's works (habitus, fields and practices, capital, representation, dispositions, differences). Habitus generates a social world in the dialectical process of "internalization-externality and externalization-internality". Practice is the link connecting habitus with the social world. To exist in the social world, according to Bourdieu, is to differ (in the artistic field, in the fields of literature, politics, etc.) [7]. P. Bourdieu's project focuses on changing the world. Thus, it is necessary to change the ways in which it is "constructed and reproduced". Reproduction in social history is always associated with the criticism of historical experience [8].

A. Lefebvre suggests interpretation of the theory of production of space as representation, imbued with knowledge, represented by "a mixture of knowledge and ideology". He associates representations with the spatial practice of every society that creates its space and dominates it. These practices represent a complex dialectic interaction, during which the domination and appropriation of products is carried out. Lefebvre's model of space representation is associated with the emergence of perspective, which is the result of a historical turn in changing the attitude of the city and the village. This perception has defined intellectual representation that forms "visualization logic" as an urban practice [22, p. 52].

John Law regards representation as one of the aspects of "concentrated presence", in which "significant absence" is depicted and reproduced. In this process, an allegory accompanies an image, in which the "jumble of realities" is associated with the perception of "unrelated multiplicity", the comprehension of which requires an "assembly method" [21, p. 329].

Thus, in the theory of social space, representation appears in the following forms: representation space and representative space, along with the space of meaning, action space and space of relations. The most important role of representation is performed in the process of constructing social objects of virtual creativity. For the social topology of the region, representation becomes the most important methodological approach in research and constructive practice. Russian sociologist D. V. Ivanov views society in the process of realizing values, in which social changes are associated with the emergence of differences between the parameters of social states. During this period, virtualization takes place as a process of re-

placing society's real objects with new orientations in the process of "simulating" (replacing) significant properties and images [19, p. 181].

When analyzing social problems of regional life, it is highly relevant to study the representations that are actively involved in its formation, based on diversity and difference. The definition of the term *region* in sociology is close to the idea of self-reproduction. This is typical of the position of most authors in the framework of the sociology of regions. Many authors write about the region as a social body and a subject of reproduction. The application of the methodology of social topology to the analysis of regional actions and events allows sociologists to assess the possibility of the impact of initiatives "implemented at the micro- and meso- levels in the development and movement of social forces at the macro-level". Representations in the social topology of the region are an important part of the methodology. They make it possible to compare social order and the process of sustainable development with inequality and the actualization of events related to social existence, with certain actions and technologies (actualization and optimization implemented on the basis of diversity and difference are actively involved in the reform of society). Space as a social construct has been methodologically successfully interpreted by A. Giddens in the aspect of the concepts of regionalization, structuration, and dual hermeneutics [12]. M. McLuhan interprets the understanding of media as "the external expansion of man."

G. M. Kazakova's project is connected with the comprehension and verification of the concept of "vernacular areas", which is formed as a result of the spatial-geographical self-identification of its inhabitants. Identification of vernacular areas is associated with a diverse texture that revives images of the territory, of places filled with a certain "spirit", of landscapes as cultural texts in the totality of the sociocultural relations of its inhabitants [20, p. 62]. The author connects the emergence of such areas with the natural territorial self-organization of society, and with its self-identification. These are areas that are endowed by their inhabitants and neighbors with certain mental characteristics, perceptions that consolidate the behavior of the people who inhabit them. Examples are Ugra, Murom forests, Polesye, Dauria, such cities as Kazan, Saransk and other regions and centers. Vernacular areas in the process of creating "images" are formed with the help of a certain set of criteria, facilitating various actions. The boundaries of vernacular regions exist only in the minds of people, they are not on geographical maps. These are peculiar reference points for the orientation of the population in the inhabited area of the region, expressed in indefinite representations.

Each region, city, or settlement is not only a territorial unit, but also represents a subjective reality in the minds and attitudes of residents in the process of their mastering of social space. Using Novosibirsk as an example, S. A. Ilynikh characterizes the possibility of constructing concepts of urban space based on the impact of mass communications and the city's social practice [18]. The study revealed gender specificity in urban space assessments. Both positive and problematic aspects of it have a pronounced specificity depending on gender.

In her study, I. A. Skalaban proposed a reconstruction of the residents' experience of the place and its image in Novosibirsk interethnic community. The author found that the constructed image is based not so much on universal symbols, but to a greater extent on the symbolism and values of the ethnic community of a corporate type. The study was carried out within the framework of two projects: in the first one, with the employment of large-scale social mapping, 7 focus groups with leaders of national-cultural autonomies were analyzed; in the other one, with the employment of social mapping, 6 group interviews were carried out with authoritative representatives of diasporas and local residents (in places of compact residence of diasporas from Central Asia and the Caucasus). The result confirms the correlation among information richness, density of meanings of the image of space, social practices associated with them, and a sense of security, which "reduces the fear of otherness" [32, p. 93].

Regional studies pay much attention to the problems of social toponymy. Toponyms are an important means of "public manifestation of identity." N. A. Galaktionov gives a comparative analysis of the toponymic situation in the cities of Tyumen and Naberezhnye Chelny (Tatarstan) in the aspect of renaming streets. In Tyumen, representation of a "Russian city" is implemented; in Naberezhnye Chelny, conversely, another strategy is employed whose essence is expressed in replacing the existing names with their translation into the language of the titular ethnic group [11, p. 159].

A. A. Nesterova and T. F. Suslova reviewed mental representations in the migration process [28]. In 2015-2016, the authors conducted interviews using the method of transsymbolic analysis. The results of the study revealed Moscow residents' bipolar emotional perceptions and migrants' expectations for support and assistance in "acceptable living arrangements". Difficulties associated with the adoption of the new status of a migrant worker and a painful attitude towards migration as a forced situation are characteristic of the representation of migrants. Residents of the region expressed more negative than tolerant attitude towards migrants. Cognitive symbolism in relation to migrants revealed itself in the following way: 52% of Muscovites associated migration with "movement" of a migrant, 27% associated it with "escape and flight", every tenth Moscovite associated migration with a "way of life" characterized by overpopulation, repression, uselessness, alienation, and illegality. A third of Muscovites presented migration as "bad", 18%—as "extensive, large-scale, global", 9%—as "dangerous". The responses of people aged between 31 and 50 are characterized by a link between the unsatisfactory nature of their economic and social status and the labor activity of migrants who are "competitors" who "reduce average wages in the region". In general, mental representations of migrants and local population impede their positive interaction.

In the sociospatial discourse, A. V. Dmitriev and G. A. Pyadukhov highlight the conflict potential associated with external labor migration in the regions of Russia. The most important place in the study of this phenomenon belongs to the monitoring of social representations. In the course of the monitoring, a measurement of

the state of migration process is recorded and its assessment is given. The researchers associate the conflict potential with the practices of "intermediaries", competitive rivalry of the subjects of the migration services market, legal unsettledness of the migration services market, the established nature of employers' influence on intermediaries serving their interests [9, p. 370].

CONCLUSION

Representations in sociology are images embedded in one's consciousness, understanding, and one's knowledge of certain material and ideal objects in various cognitive procedures. The problem of representations is relevant when considering properties, relations, and processes in interpreting social events mediated through image and language, through symbolic systems and sign models. Scientific knowledge, carried out by means of representation as a procedure, is based on the categories of "state", "event", "space", "time" and is widely used in modern social sciences. The most important role of representation is performed in the process of constructing social objects of virtual creativity. For the social topology of the region, representation becomes the most important methodological approach in scientific research and constructive practice.

Representation is a fundamental operation of human cognition and perception. The methodological analysis of representation acquires a "mathematical" interpretation in topology, philosophical monadology, and is accentuated in phenomenology, which actualizes the concept of "intentionality". Phenomenological projects of "intentionality" are developed in philosophy by comparing concepts through the relation of presentation and representation, linking it with the fact of "presence". Phenomenology helps to reveal representation as an operation rooted in the specifics of a subject in history and culture, through phenomena of cognitive, eidic, and visual "thinking". In social epistemology, representations act as intermediaries—models of symbolic, linguistic, logical, and mathematical systems. The use of various representations is associated with the modeling of certain types of values.

Regional processes constitute a particular object of representative practices analysis. Representations in the social topology of the region are an important part of methodology. They make it possible to compare the social order and the process of sustainable development with inequality and the actualization of events in the aspect of social existence and optimization. Thus, representation is a form widely used in the methodology of social cognition. The assessment of representations in the sphere of national relations (state relations, or ethnonational relations) serves as a basis for solving problems within the framework of ethnosocial and cultural processes, which is a complex object of state policy aimed at constructing regional integration models and consolidating Russian society. For sociology, representation is a tool and, therefore, a method of research and construction of social reality. For regional studies, it is an effective way to compare and distinguish between social conflicts and changes, to assess living standards and the quality of life of a person and society.

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