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Urban Cultural Space in the Context of Evolutionism

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Abstract

Attempts to determine the essence of urban culture were made in the framework of different approaches: civilizational, philosophical, anthropological, sociological, and others. This article is concerned with the analysis of the urban cultural space phenomenon from the evolutionary point of view. Originating as the first ethnographic theory in the works of German historian Friedrich Gustav Klemm, cultural evolutionism was further developed in the evolutionary theory of cultural development, the founder of which is the English ethnologist Edward Burnett Tylor. The problems of the evolutionary theory of culture were widely discussed in scientific circles and found common ground with such ideas as the "axial age" concept by Karl Jaspers and the doctrine of the noosphere. Some common points in understanding the synergistic mechanisms of cultural activities can be found in the holistic "philosophy of integrity". An evolutionary analysis of urban cultural space remains relevant today. In this article, we analyze the possibility of studying the processes of cultural transformation in the context of changes in the forms of joint social life, developing from the incoherent homogeneous structure of ancient human settlements to the complex heterogeneous structure of modern highly urbanized urban communities. Also, we attempted to justify the advisability of applying the evolutionary approach to the analysis of the laws of formation, development and improvement of the cultural space of modern cities.

Keywords: Urban cultural space, Evolutionary approach, Cultural diffusion, Urban studies.

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Introduction

When trying to characterize the multifaceted concept of "culture", researchers often use such epithets and characteristics as "kaleidoscopy", "multicolor", "inexhaustibility", and "diversity of forms and shades". Such a semantic variety of definitions is fully inherent in such a narrower field of culture as urban culture. The multi-sided manifestations of urban culture in their polyphonic interdependence gives rise to one of the most complex and interesting phenomena of civilization — urban cultural space. Like the cytoplasm binding all the components of a cell, the urban cultural space is the environment in which all the unique, specific forms of culture that are characteristic of a certain city are formed, developed, and improved. This is, so to say, a "colloidal" environment, combining disparate elements of urban culture into a single, integral, functioning organism.

Like any complexly organized system, urban cultural space can be viewed in the interaction of several factors. Firstly, it is the frame of its internal structure, secondly, it is the constituent elements, thirdly, it is the relation to the environment and, finally, it is the current state of the system. Accordingly, in the context of studies of the culture of cities the subjects of scientific discourse can be both the structural components of the urban cultural space, and the history of its evolutionary formation and development, involvement in the global cultural process. The logical sequence of the flow of urban culture forms from ancient human settlements to highly urbanized megalopolises comes to the fore in cultural studies of the present, as it allows not only to understand, but also to predict many processes taking place in society.

Urban Cultural Space: Research Approaches

The phenomenon of urban culture, not only perceived by the inhabitants of the city, but also created by them, is a relevant subject of interest of a wide range of humanities: urban studies, cultural studies, sociology, psychology, and many others. The first attempts to determine the essence of urban culture were taken as early as at the end of the 19th century in the framework of different approaches. Thus, the similarity of the history of cities and the history of civilizations attracted the attention of those who adhere to the civilizational approach, founded by Oswald Spengler, Arnold Joseph Toynbee. They considered the cultural component to being the specific link that contributed to the formation of urban civilization as a key stage in the development of mankind. The followers of the philosophical and anthropological approach presented the model of urban cultural space as a dynamic reflection of subjective and objective being, constantly responding to general world historical processes by generating new meanings of universal human discourse. Maksym Karpovets in his study of the philosophical and anthropological essence of the city writes: "A city cannot be understood without analyzing the cultural projects that a person creates, since urban culture is, above all, an anthropological phenomenon. A city dweller acts as a separate reality that is being created and at the same time falling into decay in the world of the city" (Karpovets, 2013: 3) The cultural approach, represented by K. Lynch, A. Karmin, L. Mumford, A. Moles, engenders a holistic, generalized view of a multi-level model of urban space, formed from socio-economic relations, cultural traditions and capable of influencing a person's perception of the world. Attempts to reduce the layering of the sensory-empirical meanings of urban culture and to single out its very essence, accessible only to intellectual contemplation, were made by the followers of the phenomenological approach E. Husserl, E. Cayce, V. Molchanov. The followers of the sociological approach (G. Simmel, M. Weber, L. Ionin) highlight the lagging of the subjective, personal culture's behind the objective one as the deepest reason for the influence of big cities on the individualization

of a personality. Reflecting on the individual's desire to avoid violence from society or external culture and maintain his/her independence, uniqueness, Georg Simmel in his essay *The Metropolis and Mental Life* (1903) writes "...The individual has become a mere cog in an enormous organization of things and powers which tear from his hands all progress, spirituality, and value in order to transform them from their subjective form into the form of a purely objective life" (Simmel, 2018: 11).

In our study, we will attempt to consider the urban cultural space from the point of view of the evolutionary approach as a sequence of gradually complicated changes in the forms of joint social life, going from the incoherent homogeneous structure of ancient human settlements to the complex heterogeneous structure of modern highly urbanized urban communities.

In the scientific literature, cultural evolution is often called the process of gradual adaptation of the humankind to specific conditions of existence by extra-biological means, in particular sign systems, the development of technologies and ways of interacting with the environment. The tendency of increasing the variety of means of adaptation, reflected in all areas of human activity, from scientific and technological progress to attempts to comprehend the depth of one's own consciousness, the core of spiritual values, clearly demonstrates not only a person's creative ability, but also the people's need to receive intellectual pleasure. The evolutionary approach to the study of the transformation of human culture in its most striking manifestations characteristic of urban cultural spaces seems to be a promising direction of cultural research today. In-depth scientific analysis of the cultural heritage of cities makes it possible not only to identify the prevailing trends, on the basis of which the general cultural background of mankind is changing, but also to predict possible changes in the life of society, to reveal hidden troubled zones, which means to be able to smooth out the negative consequences or eliminate the possibility of dramatic historical events. The intensification of tension in various places of the planet is often associated with geopolitical and economic processes. The degree of this tension is steadily moving upward, creating a general alarming atmosphere in society. Under these conditions, culturological studies based on an evolutionary approach can help to identify levers for steadying the general emotional background of humanity, to form new progressive patterns of existence perception and interaction of people with each other and the world.

The basic principles underlying the study of culture and society in the framework of classical evolutionism were laid down by Herbert Spencer, Edward Tylor, and Lewis Morgan. The prerequisites for the creation of evolutionism as the first ethnographic theory were laid down by the German historian Friedrich Gustav Klemm in his work *General Cultural History of Mankind* (1843-1852). Having substantiated the differences in the cultural levels of different peoples with the specifics of their racial characteristics, he proposed the doctrine of the cultural evolution stages. Klemm's ideas had a profound effect on the English ethnologist, culturologist Edward Burnett Tylor. In his book *Researches into the Early History of Mankind and the Development of Civilization* he gave a fairly clear definition of culture and proposed research samples comparing the cultures of different peoples. Tylor saw the task of the scientific theory of culture in the search for objective forces generating various cultural phenomena. Being part of the history of nature, human history creates the conditions for the emergence of knowledge, customs, myths, religions, art, technology, laws, etc. All these separate cultural phenomena constitute a complex whole specific for each individual stage of human development. Trying to apply Darwin's evolutionary theory to the origin of modern socio-cultural phenomena, Tylor emphasized the need to study primitive early culture and identify the

patterns that exist in it. So, for example, poetry in its evolutionary development, according to Tylor, went through mythological and metaphorical stages. He emphasized the evidence of the cultural evolution, distinguishing it from the evolution of natural phenomena. Among the main tasks facing researchers of culture, Tylor saw the systematization and classification of its main elements. It should be noted that this problem was not solved by him. Both the systematization of the structural elements of culture and the selection of the methodological base of its research is a complex scientific due to the range and diversity of scientific cultural discourses. Tylor paid most attention to the study of a narrower area of culture, the origin of customs, proverbs and sayings, etiquette rules, folk games.

One of the founders of evolutionism, English sociologist and philosopher Herbert Spencer identified three main stages in the development of any phenomenon (both natural and social). The first is the original syncretic integrity, the second is the stratification of the whole into parts and their transformation, and, finally, the third is the formation of new unique integrity, different from the original, but bearing its "genetic" code. There are many examples of such a different integration process. From the birth of a new life, scientific discoveries, the invention of new technologies to complex civilization processes. From Spencer's point of view, the evolution of culture was forced by structural and functional analysis. The development of culture and the formation of public organizations, in his opinion, are based on the laws of necessity. Household needs necessary for survival are the primary and basic cause-and-effect links on which the whole of human society is built. The higher aesthetic and cultural needs, according to Spencer, play a secondary role and become important only after the implementation of the primary, everyday necessities necessary for survival.

It should be noted that Spencer's consideration of the stages of phenomena development echoes the holistic "philosophy of integrity" proposed by J. Smuts. The basis of Smuts's theory is Aristotle's idea that combining two integral parts gives not just their sum, but, thanks to the action of synergetic mechanisms, generates something new, possessing both the properties of the original elements and acquiring its own unique qualities. Of course, the process of developing the cultural space of cities is a vivid example of such an interaction.

Among the American followers of the evolutionary theory of the development of culture, one name stands out. Lewis Morgan. His idea of natural evolution was combined with the idea of the progress of the mind. Having to a certain extent idealistic educational-communist views, Morgan considered equality of the rights of all members of society and the dominant position of reason in relation to private property interests as one of the conditions for achieving the common good of mankind. Especially important for culturology is his attempt to periodize the history of the culture of antiquity on the principle of "discoveries and inventions". Discovery of how to control fire, the invention of hunting tools, agriculture, cattle breeding, iron processing and pottery he considered the starting points of the transition from one cultural period to another. He referred to the creation of states as the highest inventions of reason, while recognizing the role of "diffusionism" and the transfer of cultural phenomena from one society to another in the process of migration.

Single-line and Multi-line Evolution Models

According to the concept of E. Tylor, L. Morgan, J. Feather, and others, evolution can be represented in the form of two models: unilinear and multilinear.

The gradual improvement of the social system and of man himself is characteristic of a unilinear model of evolution. In this case, the intersection of cultural patterns of different times occurs and the old patterns are replaced by new ones. So, from the point of view of the followers of this concept, humanity has three periods of its progress. The first is the dawn of its progress — wildness. The second — the period of formation — barbarism. And finally, the third — the most perfect — civilization.

The unilinear model also includes Karl Jaspers's (1883-1969) unified history of the origin of mankind and the development of its culture. The single universal process of human civilization progress undergoes the following stages: the Promethean era, the era of the great local cultures of antiquity, axial age (the era of the spiritual foundation of human existence) and the era of the development of technology.

The Promethean era is a kind of prehistory of mankind, the beginning of which Jaspers dates back to 5000 BC, the period of the formation of man as a species, characterized by the discovery of how to control fire, the genesis of speech, the creation of tools, the formation of groups, communities and the ability to transfer experience. He unites the birth of such civilizations as the Sumerian-Babylonian (4000 BC), Egyptian (4000 BC), Aegean (4000 BC), ancient India (3000 BC), ancient China (2000 BC) in the period of the great historical cultures formation. The most important stage in the development of mankind, according to Jaspers, was the stage of the formation of the spiritual foundation of human existence, which he called the period of axial age (about 800-200 BC). Touched by the spiritual thought of such great minds as Confucius, Lao Tzu, Plato, Aristotle, Heraclitus, the sermons of Buddha and Zarathustra, this stage of human evolution has become the starting point of general world history, the cornerstone underlying the essential system of humanity.

Jaspers attributed the modern stage of evolution to the technical era of the improvement of tools. In scientific and technological progress, he saw a new round of the Promethean era capable of laying the foundations for the next "axial era" through self-reflection, which means translating humanity to a new evolutionary level.

It should be noted that some modern researchers, speaking about the current stage of human development, are often using the term "proteism". Changing the postmodern era, proteism can become the progenitor of subsequent incredible changes with their great discoveries. In their opinion, the merger of technological progress and spiritual culture is capable of provoking the unimaginable evolutionary breakthrough and the transition to a new civilizational stage of human society.

The followers of the second, a multilinear evolutionary model, according to which cultural adaptation, adaptation to the environment does not obey universal laws, but moves along a variety of different paths, also spoke of a new evolutionary round. The process of differentiation, complication, and improvement of cultural patterns occurs everywhere and is characterized by the uniqueness of each individual sample and the formation of an endless variety of new cultural phenomena.

Adhering to a multilinear model of evolutionary development, the outstanding French biologist and philosopher Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955) spoke about the complication, divergence, and convergence of all processes taking place in the world, about the mind's leadership and the person's incredible ability to socialize in them. "Evolution = Rise of consciousness, Rise of

consciousness = Union effected. The general gathering together in which, by correlated actions of the without and the within of the earth, the totality of thinking units and thinking forces are engaged — the aggregation in a single block of a mankind whose fragments weld together and interpenetrate before our eyes in spite of (indeed in proportion to) their efforts to separate — all this becomes intelligible from top to bottom as soon as we perceive it as the natural culmination of a cosmic process of organisation which has never varied since those remote ages when our planet was young” (Chardin, 2002: 319). Thus, Chardin justified the transition of the biosphere to the “noosphere”, where the evolution of nature and society will not be in conflict, but will merge into a single interconnected process.

Thus, followers of both unilinear and multilinear evolutionary models come to the conclusion that the evolutionary development of mankind continues and its transition to a new stage of development is imminent.

The basic principle of the development of culture, from the point of view of the evolutionary approach, is the complete transformation of cultural patterns, a kind of “mutation” from simple to complicated, from homogeneity to heterogeneity. Each subsequent cultural level is a combination of improved elements of its previous states. Changes in certain areas of culture, social institutions or other cultural social complexes can lead to serious social humanitarian changes. So, for example, the invention of movable-type printing (and subsequent mass production of books) by Johannes Gutenberg in the 15th century boosted the development of science and culture. Having set the stage for the greatest discoveries of subsequent eras, book printing revolutionized social consciousness as well, because it made knowledge available to much larger audiences. Thus, science, art, culture, and technology act "in one bundle", imparting each other the forward movement towards improvement and progress. New cultural norms and values confirm their viability, gaining a foothold in the patterns of everyday activity or, on the contrary, lose their significance as less popular.

Discussion

If we turn to the phenomenological concept of “fact of culture” as the act of giving birth to a qualitatively new form of world perception, feeling or understanding of the world, the fact of the birth of the city as a new example of the people coexistence, a new cultural and economic form of human settlement, is an indisputable fact of the evolutionary development of human civilization. Within the framework of a single urban space, the process of differentiation of cultural forms becomes especially noticeable as a sign of a transition to a new development stage.

A look at the urban cultural space through the prism of evolutionism allows us to see it as a system of objects and their inherent relationships within a single territory. In this case, the multilevel objects hierarchy is built from an individual and the objects of the material culture surrounding him to the entire public space, contextualized by the dynamics of historical processes. However, it is necessary to mention that the territories occupied by modern megacities with millions of residents spread out so widely that the connections between the various remote districts of these huge urban areas are deformed. In this case, the function of preserving the urban cultural heritage and traditions is reserved solely to the historical center of a city and individual institutional organizations represented in the districts. Falling apart and weakly correlated fragments — this is actually what is indicated on the city map as a separate territorial unit of a modern metropolis. Thus, a look through

the prism of the evolutionary approach allows us to see the process of blurring the boundaries of the modern city, the alienation of its parts from each other. Identification with a particular city often takes place only in relation to a country or the whole world, however, the internal, behavioral cultural patterns inherent in these townspeople, traditions and ways of thinking are largely lost or mutated.

For example, the Ukrainian city of Odessa, due to its initial multi-nationality, coastal position, the abundance of the sun, an explosive mixture of diverse cultures, always had a spirit of freedom, tolerance, good neighborliness, a subtle sense of humor. Odessa was famous not only for artists, poets and musicians, but also had a unique, globally recognized intellectual potential. According to world encyclopedias, out of 6 thousand luminaries of world science, 128 people were born, studied, or worked in Odessa. And among them: 1.5% of the world's outstanding mathematicians; 1.3% - physicists; 3.8% - astronomers; 2.2% chemists; 3.7% - biologists and representatives of medical science. However, due to social and economic reasons, migration processes, and violations in the layout of urban space, Odessa, like many other cities, unfortunately, faced the processes of value orientations transformation, continuity gap in the intellectual and cultural resources transfer and the loss of unique, distinctive cultural features. This reflected in a change in the world outlook and view of life of its residents, the deformation of moral principles, a general rather pessimistic mood, leaching of intellectual resources and other often uncontrolled destructive consequences. Nevertheless, considering the history of the city from an evolutionary perspective, one can identify the rich but dormant creative potential of Odessa and represent it for the future. Culturological self-reflection, an analysis of the evolutionary processes taking place in society, can both provide the necessary prerequisites for optimizing the system of human relations within the city, and create conditions for the revival of its foundations and traditions.

Defending the validity of culturology as a scientific discipline, the classics of evolutionism have said that cultural phenomena can be explained in scientific terms. Moreover, being generated by natural causes, they can be analyzed, compared and classified, certain sequences and patterns can be revealed in them. Studying the material and spiritual heritage of cities poses many challenges for researchers: systematizing available materials, analyzing them analytically, identifying patterns in the formation of specific cultural features of each city, and identifying culture-forming factors. The main goal of cultural studies in line with urban culture is to identify the potential of the city, its hidden growth points.

For example, having analyzed the urban culture of Mantua, Italy, cultural experts and urbanists placed a premium on "the development of the traditions of publishing and bookselling; in Glasgow it was possible to use music and film as a branding device; in Helsinki creativity in rethinking the city's assets lay in public events like the Night of the Arts" (Landry, 2018: 47). Within the framework of the evolutionary paradigm, the spread of cultural customs and traditions between different regions, a comparison of their similar elements and differences seems to be a necessary component of the process of "grasping" the essence of culture, creating its three-dimensional, relief, time-unfolding image.

The evolutionary approach allows us to trace the flow of specific components of one culture into another. The huge potential of cultural reflection in the field of cultural exchange is due to the fact that such diffusion of cultural elements, often even abstract concepts, has become a driving force in the history of mankind for the development of cities, countries, and even civilizations.

Examples abound. Thus, having subjugated the Babylonian kingdom in the VIII century BC, the Assyrians borrowed and developed its art, religion, and culture. A keen collector of ancient written monuments, the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal kept a magnificent collection of Sumerian cuneiform writing for posterity. "In the ruins of the palace of Ashurbanipal in Nineveh, scientists discovered a library that was huge for that time, which consisted of many (tens of thousands) cuneiform texts. It is assumed that this library kept all the most important works of Babylonian and ancient Sumerian literature "(Markova, 2000: 59).

A remarkable example of the interpenetration of cultures is the majestic Alhambra fortress in the Andalusian mountains in southern Spain. The friendship between the Peter the Cruel Christian king of Castile and Muhammed V 11th emir of Granada resulted in the creation of one of the most interesting elements of the fortress and the palace of Muhammed V. The exquisite and sophisticated space of Court of the Lions, located in the center of the palace is an excellent example of cultural diffusion: the weightlessness of the macabre decor found only in Islam, the elegance of the architectural lines of the Nasrid dynasty perfectly harmonize with the geometrical standards of Greek architecture borrowed from the Peter Castile Palace in Seville.

Stunning evidence of wisdom and tolerance, manifested in the coexistence of Christian and Islamic cultures, can be seen in the invaluable monument of Byzantine architecture, Hagia Sophia temple in Istanbul. Having gone through different periods of its history, being at different times an Orthodox cathedral, mosque, and now a museum, the Hagia Sophia temple carefully preserves for posterity both murals and mosaics of Byzantine monumental art, depicting the faces of Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, Christian saints, and wooden shields with the names of Allah, the Prophet Muhammad, the first Caliphs and sayings from the Koran, mehrab indicating the direction of Mecca, and a carved minbar for reading Friday prayers. The image of the temple, harmoniously combining the majestic minarets of Islamic culture with the "soaring" dome of the Byzantine cathedral, in our opinion, serves as a worthy example of intercultural interaction that recognizes the values of different points of view. Being a symbol of faith for Christians and Muslims in different centuries, Hagia Sophia today creates that exciting feeling of freedom of thought, soul flight, on the one hand, entitled to its own choice of religion, and on the other hand, with the deepest respect for the choice of another person. From the point of view of the evolutionary approach, when the society recognizes the possibility of peaceful coexistence of different religious beliefs in a single space it will be a significant evolutionary step forward in mankind's consciousness. The grandeur of the Hagia Sophia temple on the horizon of Istanbul can be likened to the shape of the "temple of the future", a symbol of a new era that confidently carries the idea of kindness, brotherhood, love, mutual respect, peaceful coexistence of cultures, symbolizing the deep connection of times and peoples and transmitting it to subsequent generations.

Confirmation of the synergy born by the contact of different cultures: from the spread of religions and beliefs to the layout of cities and everyday life experiences can be found in the history of many nations.

An evolutionary look at the problems of culture made it possible to develop a descriptive model of their study, to form a complex of structural elements that make up the core of a particular culture: beliefs, morality, law, art, worldview, customs. A specific picture drawn up on the basis of these criteria provides an opportunity to approach the study of the culture of a city from a wide ethnographic perspective, taking into account the diversity of its shades.

Evolutionary research is based on data provided by archaeological excavations, written historical evidence, and direct observations. All of these sources are significant and informative for those who want to understand the essence of urban cultural space. The culture of life in ancient cities, restored by archaeological data, appears in a new light, providing material for its rethinking and reconstruction of the way of thinking of the inhabitants of ancient cities, their beliefs, rituals, everyday habits, and festivities.

It should be noted that the application of the evolutionary approach to the study of culture is not free of controversial issues. Some scholars argue that one of the main shortcomings of the evolutionary approach is its view of cultural progress as an irreversible constant of existence, similar to natural evolution. And that is wrong from their point of view.

Another drawback of the evolutionary approach to the study of culture was the substitution of concepts, which manifested itself in the view of culture only through the prism of social, economic and political progress, thus transferring the culture of more developed countries to a higher position and leveling the value of other, less developed world cultures. Such a vision undoubtedly gave some evolutionists' judgments somewhat arrogant overtone, which caused criticism of the functionalists.

Conclusion

Despite the controversial points outlined above, a look from an evolutionary point of view can provide a systematic spatial-temporal picture of the formation and development of the city's cultural space. S. Ivanov believes that "the evolutionist approach has made a significant contribution to the knowledge of the cultural reality of mankind history, to understanding of human nature, the functions of culture and the laws of its development. Thanks to this approach, a look at culture has gained some definite integrity, systematicism and orderliness" (Ivanov, 2002: 19).

Understanding the inexhaustible cultural potential inherent in cities is the most important task of modern science. The application of the evolutionary approach to solving the problem reveals both the need to analyze the past urban culture from the standpoint of the present, and the need to prepare new paradigm shifts in the consciousness of mankind, and to increase attention to its creative and intellectual internal reserves. Today, urban cultural space is exposed to many multidirectional and often opposing factors (ecology, geopolitics, etc.). New value orientations interact with old established traditions and patterns. The reality of the modern world, the speed of updating processes induce the need for constant "adjustment" to the changing conditions of the world, timely adapting of priorities. In the context of constant changes, in our opinion, the preservation and transfer to the next generations of the basic values of life, both on a global scale and at the level of individual urban communities, the preservation of kinship with one's "roots", one's city, is of particular importance. Studies of the multilevel nature of the phenomenon of urban cultural space can shed light on the origin of urban customs, traditions, foundations, the unique aura inherent in a particular city, and decipher its "genetic code". They provide an opportunity for the future to proudly call themselves residents of Istanbul, Kyiv, Odessa, a deep understanding of the cultural meaning of these words, a sense of being "a representative of a hometown", bearing a piece of its invaluable cultural heritage.

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