

# Theory and Practice of Designing a Social Environment for Sustainable Development

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**Keywords:** Social Project, Design Methodology, Social Community Environment, Project Cycle, Participatory Design, School Environment.

**Abstract:** The article is devoted to the theoretical and methodological foundations, as well as the practice of applying the project approach to creating a social environment for sustainable development. The social environment is presented as a set of conditions for the actors-interested parties interaction and development, as well as their solutions to a wide range of sustainable development problems (personal, socio-group, social, etc.). The theoretical and methodological basis of the research is a number of scientific approaches: activity-based, system-based, project-based, participatory, and environmental. Their complex use makes it possible to establish the relationship between the concepts of "social environment", "design" and the management theory general provisions, to achieve the necessary systematization and theoretical generalization levels. The article considers the participation of an active subject, the project development initiator as a key moment in the social design process. The foundations are laid for the creation of a theoretical concept and specific management decisions on the social environment formation. The educational environment in a secondary education institution is taken as the example in the process of developing a project. In this example, the project is considered as a "creating opportunities project" through the prism of involvement, interested parties representatives active interaction in the process of designing the school social environment. The article substantiates the inclusion of the participatory environment among the social design priority areas, as one of the key conditions for the development of the application field. As an example of the environment design technology practical application, the author's complex of the project annual cycle, which was implemented in the MEI GES No. 13, Noyabrsk, Yamal-Nenets Autonomous District, is considered.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Today, the concepts of "project", "design", "project approach" are firmly established and are widely used in the modern sociological theory and the social management practice. However, it should be noted that the conceptual incompleteness of the project approach as such is manifested not only in the absence of an unambiguously interpreted concept of "project", but also in the ambiguity of the concept of "design" (Makovkina, 2016). An insufficiently high level of generalization leads to the fact that none of the approaches can provide a complete theoretical picture of the existing design practice. As a result, the

research goal at this stage is, on the one hand, to combine various theoretical approaches to design within management and present them as complementary, not mutually exclusive, and on the other hand, to compare theoretical calculations on the specific management practices analysis example.

## 2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As a theoretical and methodological basis for the analysis of such an urgent problem as the environment design, a set of research approaches was used. These approaches were highlighted by the

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author in the current domestic and foreign literature analysis. Within the activity approach framework, the participation of actors, the project development initiators was analyzed. It is a key point in the process of social design, the initiation of social changes towards the sustainable development, etc. Within the framework of the system approach, the social design structure and organization were studied, the significant interrelations of elements and system-forming factors were identified. The project approach application from the management theory perspective allowed to lay the foundation for future creating of specific management decisions theoretical concept and direction on the social community environment formation in the process of developing the appropriate management project, as a type of prescriptive knowledge, future changes complex target image, involving a program of specific actions for its implementation. The participatory approach to the social design allowed, in turn, to consider the project as a "creating opportunities project" through the prism of involvement, the interested parties representatives active interaction in the social community environment designing process. The "Opportunities", on the other hand, suggest that the project is aimed at encouraging managing entities to improve the social life conditions, to participate in such social initiatives, inspired by this process. The use of the environmental approach in the study made it possible to include the social community participatory environment analysis among the social design priority areas as a condition for sustainable development at the theoretical level. It undoubtedly serves as a significant point in the issues formulation in this article.

### 3 RESEARCH RESULTS

The Design the Social Community Management: the Practical Application Characteristics and Possibilities.

To date, one of the most frequently encountered definitions in the literature and used in the design practice is the definition of a project as "a set of interrelated activities designed to achieve within a given period of time and with budget set tasks with clear goals". Despite the fact that many aspects of the above-mentioned concept interpretation of "project" and "design" are certainly true, justified and logically interrelated. Such a position cannot be considered indisputable, since in this case the "project" phenomenon is taken out of the management theory context. Instead of taking into account the

management theory and methodology, the attention is focused here on the project time limitations, its target nature, objectivity and validity, determination of the prospects for the project development in the future, etc. It should be noted that the formulations and characteristics developed in this way can be summed up for almost any type of management activity, not only for social design. However, the design, in our opinion, has a clearer specificity than noted above. In addition, such a position takes into account and substantially discloses the project activities external management. That is, the management entity that initiates the project creation, sets the certainty of actions for the actors in accordance with the project and provides them with the opportunity to implement their plans. In our opinion, this understanding takes into account the actors ability to self-organize and self-manage to a lesser extent. After all, the initiative does not come from them, actors are more often perceived as subjects of implementation, performers, etc.

According to another well-known definition given by the well-known Russian sociologist Zh.T. Toshchenko, "the social design is an activity related to the definition of options for the new social processes and phenomena (sustainable) development, purposeful changes in social institutions" (Toshchenko, 2015). Zh.T. Toshchenko, in our opinion, draws attention to the managerial, activity-based nature of design, and also notes the goal-oriented nature of this managerial detail type. Indeed, any management decision adoption implies the goal and formulation means the target image construction for its subsequent implementation in practice. Therefore, the goal as a type of management decision is a target image that has the following characteristic features (Kostin and Kostina, 2017): 1) it records various aspects (or their totality) for changing the organization in the future, its future parameters; 2) it also involves the development of actions aimed at its implementation. At the same time, based on these features, we can conclude that the management decision implies the formulation of two possible target images types, i.e. the final goal, which describes the organization parameters in the future, as well as the intermediate goal (means of implementation), which records the necessary managers actions. J. B. Queen, calling the final images the main goals, defines a "program" as "a step-by-step sequence of actions aimed at achieving the main goals" (Kelly J., 2018). Thus, the program sets the technology for achieving the goal in the process of making a management decision (Kostin and Kostina, 2017).

When analyzing a program, it is important to take into account the following aspect: the target image that should be implemented always replaces the previously objectified image in the organization. This means that project actions by their role can be described through the concept of "changes". In this case, a change is understood as a change in the organizational activity conditions.

As a complex target image, the project allows to organize the executive activity, to ensure the necessary results achievement (Bel'dieva, 2020). Thanks to the design, the organization of the management entity and the managed entities activities is carried out (Reznik, 2020). The project is developed by the management subjects, who rely on the problems that are relevant in their opinion, as well as social norms and behavior rules in a certain area (YUr'eva, 2018). It also develops an information management program for the changes project implementation. The managed entity initiates the program implementation (Karpunin., 2020). It is worth noting that the activity project consists of a specific heterogeneous management decisions complex, among which we can note the following: goals, norms, assessments, artifacts images, subjects (Gvozdannyj., 2020). In this case, the management object is a human activity, organized by the management program, which is developed in accordance with the activity project.

The management activity goal is, therefore, to organize human activity in a particular area in the direction of implementing the changes project in accordance with the developed actions program.

The Participation as the Design Fundamental Core.

In the scientific literature, the term "participation" refers mainly to the categories of "participation", "complicity", "involvement" (See the works of such authors as R. Akoff, D. Njeru, M. Deng, K. Dayer, A. Amos, M. Moon, and others (Akoff, 1981)).

For example, as K. Dayer notes, "the participation in the strict sense of the word should be understood as the people involvement in the existing organizations management activities, both formal and informal" (Dayer, 2018). In a general sense, according to A.A. Denikin, "the participation implies that a person becomes responsible for his or her own future, and increasing the "social capital" role" (Denikin, 2018).

Speaking less abstractly and more schematically, the participatory design specifics are as follows. The design subject-initiator forms a set of conditions for the interested parties representatives involvement of the main (possible) group actors in the group development process of target images organization in

the future (final goals), as well as a set of means (intermediate goals) and the appropriate participatory projects creation (complex target images). The initiator develops the participatory environment project (set of conditions) in the organization, and formalizes and details it within the corresponding plan framework, which also assumes a clear program for implementing the conceived environment complex target image.

The educational environment participatory design distinctive feature in the school will be the development of such solutions that expand the opportunities range for the design subjects involved by the initiator (initiators) from among the interested parties. Thus, within the methodological participatory-project approach framework, the effectiveness of possible ways of the organization image collective development by the potentially interested persons, the external management and self-government combination, is achieved. The involvement of interested parties-representatives of the main group actors (children, their parents, teachers, managers, social partners, and other actors) in this process, implies the following: 1) taking into account the opinion/personal position of the project participant in the development process; 2) recognizing the project participant right and providing various opportunities for developing an individual organization future image.

Thus, through the participatory technologies, the school future individual images are developed. Then they are formed into a collective image containing many visions of persons both interested and directly involved in changing the school organization. Being connected with the school functioning (which implies the social norms assimilation, as well as knowledge, skills and abilities) – the interested parties are, in fact, socialized through the participation in the participatory design. At the same time, not only children, but also adults are socialized, while elaborating certain life situations within the framework of school life, school relationships.

According to the authors' idea, the social design can be considered as a management activity, as a result of which, an active environment that ensures the sustainable development through the development of a project cycle using the participation principle can be created.

School educational environment as a subject of sociological analysis and object of design.

Nowadays improving the education social status is a vital requirement. One of the main issues identified in the Concept of the second-generation Federal State Educational Standards (FSSES) is

whether a particular education system is adequate to the individual needs, expectations, and abilities of a particular child (Federal'nyj gosudarstvennyj obrazovatel'nyj standart). Today, education, as a value-oriented process, is put at the forefront of school education, along with learning. The concept success or failure central element "on the ground" is the "school environment", "microclimate", "way of life" state. In other words, it is the school environment that determines the possibility of personal development of all educational activity subjects.

The concept of "environment" in various interpretations is present in various schools and sociology areas, which in one way or another the society structure, social processes, and subjects social interaction is considered at various social reality levels. The ontological aspect of the social environment analysis involves the study of the interaction processes between the social subject and its social environment. According to P. Sorokin, when studying the interaction processes between social subjects and their environment, the value component of the social subjects interaction with their environment gives the interaction a socio-cultural character and puts it in the center of the sociology attention (Sorokin, 1992). In fact, developing these ideas, T. Parsons considers the societal community internal and external environments (Perenos, 2002). In the scientist's view, the environment is the action system integral attribute, which must be taken into account and controlled. Here, it is important to note that it is the school, in addition to specific knowledge, skills and abilities transmitted from generation to generation in the process of education and upbringing, that implements the individual socialization, inculturation functions. In turn, C. Vagt, F. Aschemeyer, M. Rosabal-Coto, S. Storm, H. Keller, I.G. Belyakova, M.R. Moskalenko and others (Vagt, 2020) develop these ideas by studying the relations in the educational environment, and recognize that the environment acts as the most important socialization channel for the individual. The individual, once in a certain environment, assimilates or denies the institutionalized value preferences supported by the social control system in a particular community or organization. Thus, foreign and domestic scientists and researchers, with all the variety of the environment interpretations, agree on one thing. They all more or less recognize the fact that the environment as a set of social phenomena supposes the presence of a certain subject formed by this environment and, at the same time, actively involved and influencing it by their actions. To summarize, the "social environment" can be

interpreted as a set of conditions that create opportunities for the subjects to carry out certain activities types that contribute to or hinder the achievement of the expected results. The interaction with the environment can be both positive for the subject, increasing the personal potential and the activities effectiveness, and negative, reducing or even destroying the subject potential. Thus, methodologically, the environment design in the organization is associated with the "potential opportunities" concept. The current understanding of the school environment influence on socialization is narrow, since it does not take into account the children and adults mutual creativity potential, the influence on the children upbringing not only in the school, but also in the family climate, the interaction potential between parents and teachers and the school and their inclusion as full participants in school life.

Meanwhile, at present, parents are usually limited to only indirect control over academic performance, through the participation in parent-teacher conferences. Also, such a narrow understanding of socialization and education does not pay enough attention to the children, parents and teaching staff inclusion in solving various problems. Not only school, but also personal (relationships with other social groups representatives), social (improving the school education effectiveness through interest, empathy, involvement of all interested persons (actors), connecting the school to solving patriotic, cultural, moral, ideological, and other tasks). The analysis of the scientific literature has shown that in some works, the authors overcome the narrowness of the common understanding regarding the school education organization as a socialization tool. Thus, M.P. Artamonova notes that "the school environment educational sector under consideration includes all types and forms of purposeful and specially organized joint activities of actors to translate and assimilate these norms, values and knowledge in the sign-symbolic forms corresponding to this cultural and educational environment in the communication interactions course" (Artamonova, 2014). It is these components that together have a socializing, formative, active influence on the actors personality, on the persons interacting in this environment personality". However, it is important not only to theoretically identify the importance of purposeful and specially organized joint activities of actors for the translation and assimilation of these norms, values and knowledge in the appropriate educational environment, but also to develop approaches to the implementation of this concept in practice, in relation

to the school activities. This, among other things, is the novelty of the author's approach.

## 4 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The purpose of designing the social community environment on the school environment example is to identify and create various opportunities with the wide range of interested parties involvement as subjects, actors. The initiator designs the creation process. The actors, realizing the environment possibilities, are involved in the design of events within the community, various kinds of "mini-projects", etc. The motivation for the actors interaction, in our opinion, can be the opportunities realization, the "success situation" creation, the communication environment acquisition. So, the teacher is considered as the starter of most educational initiatives at school. In our opinion, it is necessary to expand this framework, making all the educational process subjects a source of initiative, "burning", new ideas, non-standard courageous decisions. As follows from the above, the peculiarity of this approach applied in school social and managerial practice is that the participatory projects actors can be not only students, but all participants in the relationship can be parents, teachers, administration representatives, as well as other interested persons, social partners involved and located in this environment. Here it is important to understand that such an environment is no longer focused only on children, as it is often interpreted (the "educational environment", etc.), but it covers and develops all the educational process subjects. Its quality changes, the potential for setting and solving problems increases, and so on. Accordingly, the participatory environment creates a wide range of opportunities. These are:

- The opportunities for establishing relationships between subjects, understanding motives, and coordinating views (group solidarity) in the course of joint activities;
- The opportunities to consolidate the efforts related to changes, in the course of joint initiatives group implementation (team building);
- The opportunities for expanding one's own views and enriching social experience, personal growth in the course of intergroup interaction;
- The opportunities to implement own initiatives, ideas (self-realization, self-expression,

creativity) in the course of intra-school events participatory design;

- The values situational assimilation possibilities, behavioral patterns focused on social activity in the course of joint activities within a specially created situation (the situation of success).

At the same time, the participatory environment can be considered not only as a condition necessary for creating opportunities for the actors sustainable development, but also as a means of such sustainable development.

## 5 CONCLUSION

As shown by the analysis of theoretical, methodological and practical problems of the environment formation on the secondary schools educational environment creation and development example (institutions of secondary education), the main task is the following. Today, it is necessary to develop a suitable technology for creating an environment that would take into account the specifics of the administrative subjects and the object (whether it is schools, or other organizations, as well as larger communities, such as cities, etc.). In our opinion, the social design can be put forward as such a technology. It is the design that makes it possible to develop a complex target image of changes in a particular social community, in our case, a school, in the existing problems context, as well as taking into account its educational orientation. The development and subsequent implementation of the school educational environment image as a set of conditions for creating opportunities for sustainable development in the applying management design technologies process, in all interested parties (actors) interaction, will ensure a departure from direct socialization, to indirect education. This is a condition for the student "natural" school environment formation, the possibility of the actions activation stage independent passage by students, the life interest manifestation and strengthening, to create a basis for gaining the democratic behavior and interaction experience. A significant role in the environment formation is played by the social design as a comprehensive technology for the implementation of the Federal State Educational Standard and school programs of students education (self-education), development, self-determination and social formation. Summing up the analysis of theoretical and methodological approaches to the social community environment design study on the

school educational environment example, it is necessary to note that the practical problems of social management in the educational field determine the need for further development of the educational environment theory and methods of its design.

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