

# THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

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## Forming the Practices of Citizens' Participation in the Development of the Urban Environment: Habitualization or Institutionalization From Above\*



Elena O.  
**SMOLEVA**

Vologda Research Center, Russian Academy of Sciences

Vologda, Russian Federation

e-mail: riolenas@rambler.ru

ORCID: 0000-0002-6452-1441; ResearcherID: I-8343-2016

**Abstract.** The article presents findings of a sociological research on the process of formation of social practices of citizens' participation in the development of the urban environment. Creating a new, people-friendly urban space involves taking into account the interests of various population groups and working out the mechanisms for citizens' involvement in urban management. The purpose of the work is to identify main ways for engaging citizens in the development of the urban environment by analyzing the processes of institutionalization. The theoretical and methodological basis of the research includes works devoted to social institutions and institutionalization, social movements as institutionalization agents, the right of citizens to participate in urban development, and the issues of civic participation in designing urban spaces. The analysis has identified main participants (actors) whose interests are affected when the issue concerning the development of the urban environment is formulated and addressed. We consider two processes of formation of the rules according to which the actors perform their functions in public arenas: from below through habitualization or from above as an import of social institutions. We show the differences in the process and results of institutionalization of civic engagement in the presence or absence of a conflict of interests among the main actors: society, government, business community. We compare the processes according to the following parameters: the nature of institutional

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changes, relations and actions, type of institutional changes, structure of political opportunities, and civic engagement levels. We draw conclusions about how the orientation of the processes affects the nature of civic participation. In particular, the loss of the “partnership” and “delegation of authority” stages in the process of institutionalization from above indicates a formal and imitative nature of the practices of civic participation in urban development. The novelty of the work consists in comparing the oppositely directed processes of institutionalization of civic participation (from below and from above) on the example of a specific sphere such as urban development.

**Key words:** social institution, social practices, habitualization, institutionalization, civic participation.

## Introduction

Modern urbanism notes the change of paradigm in city development: instead of “a city as an office” model comes “a city for life” model and social meaning is put in public space design<sup>1</sup>. Creating an urban space, that is new and comfortable for people, involves considering the interests of different population groups and the presence of a social request for a different quality of environment. In 2020, 75% of Russians lived in cities<sup>2</sup>, and it is their interests that meet the main provisions of the national project “Housing and Urban Environment”, which directly links the urban improvement with the creation of a mechanism for direct public participation in its formation. According to the instruction of the President of Russia V.V. Putin, the proportion of this category of citizens should increase to 30% by 2024<sup>3</sup>.

The development of the urban environment from the point of view of the residents and the civic initiatives they put forward is connected, first of all, with its quality. In the academic community there is no unambiguous interpretation of the concept of “quality of urban environment”, it is often substituted by the concept of “comfortable urban

environment”<sup>4</sup>. In order to live more comfortably, citizens contribute to the development of the city. However, the quality of the urban environment, its perception by the inhabitants determines their behavior: either prosocial (care of the environment, its restoration) or antisocial (vandalism) [1, p. 260].

Comfort of living, use and appropriation of urban areas, accessibility of public spaces are the components of the “right to the city” [2]. In modern conditions, the implementation of the “right to the city” occurs against the background of the increasing role of non-institutional forms of citizen participation [3]. Activation of social interactions at the local level is provided by the fact that the problems affect both individual residents and the local community as a whole [4, p. 23].

The number of academic studies of collective action and social movements from the perspective of neo-institutional theory is increasing[5; 6], comparisons of institutional and extra-institutional actors of urban change are carried out [7], but studies concerning formation mechanisms of public associations in Russia are still fragmentary [8, p. 113–114].

**The purpose of the work** is to identify the main ways of forming practices of citizen participation in urban improvement with an emphasis on the study of their institutionalization processes.

<sup>1</sup> See, for example: Residents of comfortable cities tend to be sedentary. Available at: <https://iq.hse.ru/news/177666082.html>

<sup>2</sup> The proportion of the urban population of the Russian Federation in the total population. *Rosstat*. Available at: <https://rosstat.gov.ru/>

<sup>3</sup> National project “Housing and Urban Environment”. Available at: <https://minstroyrf.gov.ru/trades/natsionalnye-proekty/natsionalnyy-proekt-zhilye-i-gorodskaya-sreda/>

<sup>4</sup> Aleshina E.P. Analysis of the use of urbanized area of Ryazan in order to optimize the characteristics of the comfort of the environment: Candidate of Sciences (Geography) dissertation. Ryazan, 1999. 155 p.

## Theoretical approaches to the study of social practices and social institutions

### *Social practices and social institutions*

In sociology, the category "social practice" is represented in the works of P. Bourdieu, P. Berger and T. Lukman, A. Giddens, G. Garfinkel, A. Schütz, etc. P. Bourdieu defined social practices as actions of social subjects<sup>5</sup>, which correspond to their established attitudes. Two types of practices are distinguished: everyday habitual actions and purposeful actions to transform social reality. The individual determines the appropriateness of actions based on habitus – a system of dispositions, structured "principles that give rise to practices and perceptions..." [9, p. 102]. According to A. Giddens, social practices are reproduced by actors on a regular basis, so he introduces the concept of "routinization" as the performance of actions in a habitual way. Social practice is not created every time by social actors, but is only reproduced by them [10, p. 185].

Individual actions are transformed into social practices in the process of ordering and repetition, which is called "routinization" [10] or "habitualization" [11]. Social action through the stage of habitualization passes to the status of social practice and further – social institution. "Institutionalized rules... make the relationship between actor and action more socially tautological than causal" [12, p. 18]. Institutions, actors and scripted actions "form an inseparable triad"; their co-constitution, however, "neither eradicates individuality nor weakens the actor" [13, p. 900]: the habitualization of action does not mean its thoughtless automatism.

In Russian sociology, the scientific discourse revolves around the relationship between the concepts of "social practices" and "social institutions". Some scholars believe that social

institution is a stable form of practice, for the most part identifying practice with private institutions [14, p. 95]. The opposite view is that social practices are forms of functioning of social institutions. Social institutions are assigned the status of "content", "essence". [15, p. 7; 16, p. 11]. S.G. Kirdina introduces the concept of "institutional forms", which, unlike basic institutions, act as social practices [17]. In our opinion, the consideration of social institutions and practices in the philosophical tradition of the binary approach as essence and form will not allow fully identifying institutional changes in Russian society, because it is based on the principle of prevalence of essence over form. From the perspective of the system approach, "social practices – actions" and "social institutions – dispositions" are interrelated components of one system, but their connection is mediated contextually. From this perspective, we propose to consider the formation and transformation of these system elements.

### *Processes of formation and change of practices and institutions. Social movements as agents of institutional change*

P. Berger and T. Lukman build the process of formation of practices in four stages: habitualization, typification (identification of typical interaction ways of agents), institutionalization (identification of the role matrix – institution) and legitimization of ideas and social actions [11, p. 98]. Due to reciprocal typifications, "unique activities" of the individual become "socially meaningful, scripted actions" [13, p. 900]. Legitimization processes play a central role in the reproduction and change of social orders. According to the theory of social constructivism, new ideas and rules must be accessible and reflect public opinion, which is possible with certain efforts by groups of people to construct frames of understanding the world and themselves that they share, which legitimize and motivate collective action [18, p. 6].

<sup>5</sup> Along with the concept of "social subject", the concepts of "agent" (M. de Certeau) and "actor" (M. Crozier, E. Friedberg, P. Bourdieu) are used in the consideration of social practices and social institutions (author's note).

The following mechanisms may be involved in changing social practices:

- emphasis on certain social actions with their subsequent representation as social norms;
- transition of practices from marginal to normative;
- borrowing of social practices [19, pp. 17–18].

Institutionalization is the process of establishing new rules or confirming existing ones [20]. Modern approaches to institutionalization take it beyond the usual actions. The essence of the process is “the permeating of social movement activity into institutional spaces” [21, p. 275], “establishment of organizational habitats of activists within institutional spaces” [22, p. 197]. Features of its course inherent in the structure of political opportunities – a set of factors on which depends the probability of collective action and the ability to achieve the set political goals [23, p. 11]. The structure has an open or closed nature, which is due to the readiness of the political system to interact with different groups of the population. It is often enough expressed that institutions are the result of struggle, and social relations of actors are asymmetrical [24; 25; 26].

Agents of institutional change are social movements [27], which correlate with institutionalized practices in a certain institutional environment [5]. From the opposite point of view, social movements develop within informal, non-institutionalized systems [28, p. 11; 29, p. 166].

#### *The order of institutionalization*

N.A. Skobelina defines the direction of this process from above as a feature inherent in the process of institutionalization of social movements in Russia [5, p. 126]. The classical way consists in the creation of movements from below: movements are formed and grow out of a group of like-minded people united by the search of a solution to a specific problem.

An important step in both processes is the recognition of legitimacy in the system of state power, legitimization in the public consciousness.

The process of institutionalization from below passes through the stages from the emergence of social need to the recognition of legitimacy in the system of state power, legitimacy in the public consciousness. At the initial stage there are no rigidly assigned social roles and statuses for individual participants. Institutionalization from above begins with the formation of goals on the part of the authorities, the creation of an order of action and the organizational core of the public association. Formalized rules and stable status-role positions, the presence of plans for the long term are the markers of the stage of institutionalization [5].

Notably, W. Gamson [30] singles out the transformation of civic activists into legitimate participants in public discussion and representatives of the interests of a particular social group as a significant result along with the achievement of publicly stated goals. He is supported in this by researchers who propose to focus precisely on the transformation of activists’ positions in horizontal and vertical networks [31, p. 133].

#### *Practices of civic participation in urban development*

Nowadays in Russia, there is a demand from both society and the state for civic participation in the development of the urban environment, so the formation of appropriate practices is initiated by various groups of players: civic activists, public associations, representatives of the authorities, the business community. The strategies of the players operating in the institutional field are conditioned by power positions and asymmetries of relations [26, p. 186; 32]. Countries with a prevalence of state values over civil society values are characterized by more confrontational strategies [33, p. 50]: social movements challenging the existing power relations engage in confrontation, and the power, which the social protest is aimed at, in its turn, develops a set of formal and informal rules of the game [34].

S. Arnstein showed the difference between the “empty ritual of formal participation” and the real

citizens' participation in the management of the city on the example of the "ladder of civic participation" [35]. The steps of the "ladder", corresponding to the degree of citizens' authority, are grouped by levels from non-participation through imitation of activities (symbolic measures) to civil management. The latter includes the stages of partnership, delegation of powers and civil control.

Studies of civic participation in Russia show that local communities become active when the right to appropriate urban space is threatened. The rallying to defend interests takes place in "small" public spaces at the level of a house, a group of houses, a block, and much more rarely at the level of a city. "The developed practice of interaction, especially if it proves to be effective, contributes to the further development of the local community" [4, p. 30]. The opposite is also true: the consolidation of residents leads to the closure or revision of unwanted projects. Thus, E. Tykanova and A. Khokhlova give an example when the gradual institutionalization of the initiative group became an important driver of success in solving the urban planning conflict [26, p. 187].

### **Methodology**

In order to achieve the goal of the research based on the review of the theories we formulated the research questions:

- who are the main participants (players), whose interests are affected in the construction and solution of the social problem – the development of the urban environment;
- what are the rules according to which the players act in the public arena forming social practices;
- how these rules are constructed: from below through assimilation or from above as an import of social institutions;
- how does the focus of "bottom vs. top" processes affect the nature of civic participation?

A multiple case study was chosen as the field research strategy. The information base included the

materials of digital networks on the topic of urban improvement, revealing the problems in this area, and media publications posted on the Internet. The base contained texts about the actions of activists from informal public associations, the activities of various project groups on urban development. The selection of cases for the study of institutionalization processes from below was made according to several criteria. The main participants, whose interests are affected when constructing and solving a social problem, in this case are citizens, who take individual actions, or informal associations of citizens, as well as institutional actors, who have resources for the development of the urban environment. Therefore, first, examples of non-associated forms of civic participation were selected, but necessarily in conjunction with information about interactions with institutional actors (government and local self-government authorities) and the population. Second, the range of problems of urban development was defined: improving the comfort of house and adjacent territory; creation or preservation of public spaces. Third, information should be presented from different perspectives: the official position of the authorities and the position of activists. For example, the search for cases of improving the comfort of the adjacent territory was carried out with an initial Google search requests on the competitions "Flowery City" ("Beautiful city", "Flowery dooryard", etc.) and the subsequent search for interviews with the winners of competitions. Materials were divided into two categories on the basis of "interaction of activists and institutional actors": without conflict and with conflict of interest. Fourth, information about individual cases is presented as much as possible for all stages of institutionalization from below [5]: emergence of need; formation of common goals; internalization of norms; spread of institutionalized forms of activity; recognition of legitimacy in the eyes of authorities, legitimacy in the mass consciousness; establishment of a system

of sanctions and rewards; creation of a system of statuses and roles.

Ten cases were selected (30 cases in total): civic participation in the development of urban environment without conflict of interest (individual and joint actions) and civic participation in the development of urban environment with conflict of interest (joint actions). As an illustration of the institutionalization process from below 11 cases were included in the article: “texts about civic participation in the development of urban environment without conflict of interest” (cases of Moscow, Blagoveshchensk, Yekaterinburg, Bogatoye settlement in Samara Oblast) and “texts about civic participation in the development of urban environment with conflict of interest” (cases of Yekaterinburg, Korolyov, Nizhny Novgorod, Vologda, Saint Petersburg). A preliminary analysis of civic participation practices showed high activity of the population of Moscow and Saint Petersburg, but the research base was deliberately expanded by searching for various practices of residents of localities from other regions. Thus, practices that took place in settlements with different populations and different administrative status came to the attention of the researcher. The full list of materials included in the article is given in the Appendix.

The array of texts was subjected to event- and discourse analysis according to the following scheme: topic is subject of discussion, theme, general meaning, main content, context, verbal reactions, comments. The main content was structured into sections corresponding to the stages of institutionalization.

Additionally, we used data from the empirical base of the research under RFBR grant no. 19-011-00724 “Barriers to civic participation and mechanisms of overcoming them at the regional level” (expert interviews). The subject matter of the interviews is quite broad and concerns various aspects of civic participation in different spheres. In this regard, as additional arguments the article

includes the data of two expert interviews, where the question was about the involvement of residents in the development of the urban environment: expert 1 – head of a public association; deputy of the City Duma, former head of the public council; expert 2 – member of the Vologda Public Council.

#### **Institutionalization of civic participation from below**

The content of the stages of institutionalization of citizen participation in the development of the urban environment on the initiative of the activists themselves is influenced by the presence or absence of the players’ conflict of interest: society, government and the business community.

Institutionalization from below without a conflict of interest is usually expressed in the improvement of the urban environment within the framework of tactical urbanism or affects “small” public spaces. After the need to improve certain small urban objects, most often “small” public spaces (entrance halls, adjacent territories, etc.) arises, activists form goals: for example, to restore an entrance hall in dilapidated housing, to improve the appearance of wooden houses, to get adjacent territory in order. In the course of performing the assigned tasks, repetitive actions become habitual. If at first “*They got the adjacent territory in order*”, then “*We saw cheap tiles, pounded in some places, at the construction site. We did the tiling – it turned out beautifully*”, “*We bought stone in the quarry – we paved a bowl for the fountain and a waterfall slide*” (Blagoveshchensk). Or: “*We managed to turn the scorched earth into a garden in three years. During this time we planted about 150 trees and shrubs, as well as perennial flowers and herbs*” (Yekaterinburg 1);

“*We created the art object in the third season of the festival, and before that we spent two years restoring the old building of the post and telegraph office*” (Bogatoye settlement). In order to achieve the goal, activists develop rules of conduct and interaction with the managing companies, neighbors, representatives of the business community, at the

level of the municipality with the authorities and various institutions. For example: “*At the request of the tenants, the utilities workers stopped dumping snow mixed with chemicals on the lawns*” (Moscow 1), “*The managing company helped with the purchase of constructional materials*” (Blagoveshchensk), “*I negotiated with the organization responsible for the work and ended up sending an official letter to the Moscow Mayor. Then I got support from the local managing company*” (Moscow 2). But they do not always lead to agreements: “*There is also a financial problem: there are few entrepreneurs here, and not everyone is willing to help*” (Bogatoye settlement). The process of institutionalization goes through the habitualization of actions and is expressed in the presence of stable patterns of behavior, interactions, and informal rules.

As the results of institutionalization from below, we present the following:

- the spread of institutionalized forms of activity, for instance: “*The example of the tenants of a house in Sivtsev Vrazhek, who used their own money to uncover murals on the ceiling of their apartment building, inspired the return of the entrance hall to its historical appearance*” (Moscow 2);
- establishing a system of sanctions and rewards: “*The garden on Bibirevskaya participated in a landscaping contest and was rewarded with seedlings from Aptekarsky Ogorod*” (Moscow 1), “*In Blagoveshchensk, the results of the contest for the best yard of an apartment building were summed up. The organizers accepted more than 30 applications*” (Blagoveshchensk), “*Neighbors come and accord a thank-you*” (Moscow 1);
- creating a system of statuses and roles: “*mistress of the garden*” (Moscow 1), “*manages this lawn*” (Vologda);
- consolidation of the local community: “*Local janitor Ilhom brought oriental roses from Uzbekistan, his homeland. Sasha, a neighbor from the dacha near Moscow, brought the same grapes, plum and pear seedlings. Another neighbor brought strawberries*”

(Moscow 1); “*No one forced the neighbors. When they saw that the work was moving, gradually neighbors joined in – some to plant flowers, some to paint something. Even those who were initially against it came*” (Blagoveshchensk), “*So many people came that there weren't enough tools for everyone*” (Yekaterinburg 1). Although there is the opposite result: “*After three seasons, he still could not find like-minded people*” (Bogatoye settlement).

As a significant result, let us single out the realization of the “right to the city” in the form of the appropriation of territories, going beyond the limited space of an apartment. Value bases of civic activism are formed: “*The main idea is that this is what citizens do for citizens*” (Yekaterinburg 1), “*Festival helps, first of all, not houses, but people – to change their way of thinking, to believe that progress is possible*” (Bogatoye settlement). For the spread of informally anchored social practices, it is important not just to broadcast positive experience and motivation (“*My advice to the tenants of historic buildings is to be actively involved in the improvement of their own entryway*” (Moscow 2)), but to transfer experience: “*If any work begins, you should immediately contact “Archnadzor” or other nonprofit organizations. They will direct people to the right places and help make sure that the old tiles are not removed or the old windows are not replaced*” (Moscow 2).

Let us note the role of the socio-cultural context as an example of the differences in the support of civic initiatives by residents of cities and small towns. “*In the village there are fewer active residents than in the city. A festival for city dwellers is an opportunity to escape somewhere from their apartments, while in our settlement there are places to go: to the river, to the lake, to the garden, to the woods. This is why the festival in the village is attended only by people with ideas, and there are not many of them. In addition, the residents of settlements are disdainful of going to paint their neighbor's house*” (Bogatoye settlement).

Public discourse regarding leaders is filled with themes of responsibility and activity, exclusivity: “*One is the most active, who will take on this responsibility, make efforts and call the shots*” (Moscow 2); “*The villagers needed some kind of hero, an engine that will advance their interests*” (Bogatoye settlement).

So, during the formation process of the institution of citizen participation in the creation of a comfortable urban environment from below in the absence of a conflict of interest, the mechanism of habitualization is involved, as well as all the stages presented in the “ladder of civic participation” by S. Arnstein are implemented.

The process is somewhat different if we consider it in relation to civic associations, because in this case the emphasis is put on organizational formality, development and internalization of norms, rules of behavior, as well as recognition of the legitimacy of a civic association in the eyes of the authorities, its legitimacy in the mass consciousness. More often than not, citizens are forced to unite by a conflict of interests, so at the initial stage of the institutionalization of civic participation the emergence of the need for a social movement is related to activists defending their position and the interests of the population. For example, according to VTsIOM data,<sup>6</sup> 74% of Yekaterinburg residents did not believe that the city square near the Drama Theater was an appropriate place to erect a religious building (Yekaterinburg 2). Activists form common goals most often in the format of slogans and appeals: “*You want a temple, we want a square – there will be war*” (Yekaterinburg 2), “*Let's protect Ryabinovy Square!*” (Korolyov), “*Let's preserve and improve the square...*” (Nizhny Novgorod). In order to expand the movement and rally residents, organizational registration is carried out on social media: the movement “The River unites”, the

VKontakte group “Let's save the square in Prioksky District”, etc.

In the initial stages of the movement development in a situation of conflict of interest, the structure of political opportunities is of a closed nature. The authorities demonstrate their unwillingness to interact with different groups of people: “An official from the governor's administration arrived... The only thing to check is whether so many residents are really against the construction or whether it was just a bunch of insane citizens who made such a fuss” (Nizhny Novgorod). Until activists bring the problem to the federal level and protest actions intensify, the authorities stubbornly ignore the opinion of experts and citizens, as demonstrated by the history of protests against bank protection in Vologda and the construction of the Okhta Center in Saint Petersburg. Since in situations of conflict or asymmetry of relations the authorities develop a procedure, the response of the opposing party also becomes the development of rules of conduct: “*Yes, all conversations with the police and other defenders of construction are recorded. Video recording should be turned on before the conversation*” (Yekaterinburg 2), “*We draw only flowers on the asphalt. No political slogans! We do not make any political statements in interviews!*” (Vologda).

In order to achieve the goal, the public activists are forced to resort to the tactic of active interactions, they urge citizens: “*We need to write to Kuivashev on his Instagram account, while comments are not yet disabled there. It is also necessary to involve the maximum number of the major media, write and call all departments*” (Yekaterinburg 2), “*Let's go out tonight for a rally! Let's meet with representatives of the administration!*” (Korolyov), “*We can try to have phone conversations with him... In the meantime, written statements from the initiative group have been submitted today. And letters, and a flash mob, etc., everything will happen*” (Nizhny Novgorod).

<sup>6</sup> City and Church: VTsIOM survey in Yekaterinburg. Available at: <https://wciom.ru/analytical-reviews/analiticheskii-obzor/gorod-i-khram-opros-vciom-v-ekaterinburge>

The forms of activity that have not yet been institutionalized are disseminated by informing, advising, and involving citizens through petitions and participation in rallies. Activists broadcast experience in solving problematic issues: “*On the official site of the Russian public initiative you need to be registered through the Gosusligi*” (Nizhny Novgorod), “*We planned to work out a scheme that other interested citizens can use. But so far the committee suppresses attempts to replicate our experience*” (Saint Petersburg 2).

Situations of conflict of interest unfold between activists, on the one hand, and business and government, on the other. But in this situation, the interests of activists and the entire population may not coincide. Quite often activists additionally convince the population what their interests are. Therefore, the processes of legitimization in mass consciousness are ambivalent: “*Residents and those who supported them, you did a good job*” (Korolyov) vs. “*Surprised by the complete indifference of the residents of the Vologda Oblast*” (Vologda). On the part of the population there is also the assignment of responsibility for solving the problem to the ‘core’ of the social movement: “...*no one is stopping us from controlling this process!*” (Yekaterinburg 2). However, in the absence of dialogue with the authorities, pessimistic sentiments arise among the population: “*We know that the comments will not be taken into account*” (Yekaterinburg 2). In the case of conflicts of interest, social roles are constructed on the part of the opponents. For example, the protest campaign against the construction of the Okhta Center in Saint Petersburg was built on the image of the “alien-invader”, which contributed to the strengthening of the urban conservation movement by consolidating residents on the basis of the identity of Saint Petersburg resident. Supporters of the construction broadcast the image of the opposition as “fringe”, “provocateurs” and “urban madmen” [36]. The discourse toward

leader and activist figures turns toward disparaging characterizations: “*I am your neighbor. This is the tedious man who was disturbing your rest in the evenings*” (Nizhny Novgorod); “*Activists are often thought of as urban madmen*”, “*Some idiot showed up and did this*” (Saint Petersburg 2).

Social practices that received broad public support are usually recognized by the authorities as legitimate: “Today the reception of the initiative group at Morozov’s office was held, and the minister of construction of the Nizhny Novgorod Oblast was also present” (Nizhny Novgorod), “... *to organize a direct conversation between two sides with each other. I am ready to mediate in this conversation*” (from the mayor’s blog, Yekaterinburg 2) and even “*The governor of the Moscow Oblast harshly pointed out to Aleksandr Khodyrev the mistakes made by the municipal leadership*” (Korolyov).

There is a temporary consolidation of the community: “*At various times there are from a few hundred to a thousand and a half to two thousand people at once*” (Yekaterinburg 2); “*People who live in the same neighborhood and previously, let’s face it, paid little attention to each other, have now begun to recognize their neighbors in the streets, have begun to say hello. And that’s great!*” (Nizhny Novgorod); “*Before, there was no forum where they could talk about it, and now there’s not only a group of “Derev’ya Peterburga”, but also similar communities made by residents of almost every district*” (Saint Petersburg 2).

The situations under consideration require an effort on the part of activists to maintain and expand their group, in which a new order of action is formed: “*Dealing with a team is very difficult, and I understand it’s not just my problem. It is very difficult to get people to do something, because not everyone has as many resources as I do*” (Saint Petersburg 2); “*Only those who take to heart the problem of the embankment sign up for groups concerned about this topic*” (Vologda).

If we talk about such an indicator of institutionalization as the presence of long-term plans, they relate only to the problem situation around which civic activism is unfolding: “*Officials have publicly reported on their work, but this does not mean that we have to stop asking questions and trying to build a constructive dialogue with them*” (Yekaterinburg 2); “*Do not leave the group until the issue is finally resolved*” (Nizhny Novgorod).

Analysis of practice showed that few public associations reach the stage of creating a system of statuses and roles, because civil activism in Russia is situational in nature, and even to the stage of legitimization, because the population keeps out of the regular activists’ actions. The dual situation is with the recognition of associations by the authorities – from cooperation in cases of large-scale support to substitution of the partnership between the authorities and citizens with “imitation of a dialogue”. *Expert 1: “The purpose of the workshops was to stem the tide. This is probably the right thing to do, because people have spoken up and said what they want to see and how they want to see it”.*

It is important for civic participation when the initiative comes from below, when residents are ready to take responsibility for the future fate of an area or object: “*We wanted to do everything ourselves, without spending budgetary funds, and were even ready to take care of these trees or give money for it*” (Saint Petersburg 2).

### **Institutionalization of civic participation from above**

When passing the process of institutionalization from above, in addition to improving the quality of life and creating a comfortable urban environment, the import of civil society institutions is added as a need, so the goals from the authorities are formed in the form of quantitative indicators: “To increase the proportion of citizens taking part in addressing the issues of urban environment by

2024 to 30%”. The creation of an order of action by the authorities is documented: Standards of integrated territorial development, Standard of citizen involvement in the solution of issues of urban environment development, Quality index of urban environment. In order to implement the goals, special organizations are assigned to represent the interests of municipal authorities. As an example of such organizations are regional competence centers on urban environment. At the stage of recognizing the legitimacy of the created institutions in the mass consciousness, the created structures are presented as legitimate mediators between the population, power and business. The spread of institutionalized forms of activity is carried out by involving citizens in public discussions, initiated by established organizations. At the final stage, a system of social (public) control is formed, which involves the structures created with the support of the authorities (All-Russia People’s Front, public councils).

During the analysis of the materials presented on the information portals, changes in the institutions of urban environment development were identified. First, the number of participants in the development of solutions has increased. These are both public associations, which are the result of initiative from below (“Urban Projects”, “Beautiful City”, etc.) and structures created with the support of the authorities (national competence center “Smart City”, regional competence centers on urban environment). Hybrid structures are developing (for example, the public association “Urban Renovations”, the transition of the Institute of Urban Development of Bashkortostan to the status of a regional competence center on urban environment development). In one territory, both organizations formed with the assistance of the city authorities and associations created at the initiative of activists are simultaneously dealing with issues of urban development. Different actors organize discussions of projects of the same urban spaces,

that forces citizens to make a choice: which of the organizations represents their interests, whose project will be implemented. For example, when designing public spaces in the context of conflict of interest, municipal authorities turned to specialists from another region, refusing to work with the local architectural community (the project to improve the embankment in Vologda, the construction of the Okhta Center in Saint Petersburg). In addition, the limited number of local experts raises questions about the feasibility and effectiveness of multiple single-issue structures.

Second, in a competitive environment, the state plays an active role in the formation of urban development institutions, which is manifested in the adoption of a pool of documents of federal importance, the development of instruments of civic participation in the formation of the urban environment. For example, the Standard for citizen involvement in urban environment development, elaborated in 2020 jointly by the Ministry of Construction, Housing and Utilities and the Agency for Strategic Initiatives, regulates more than 20 formats of work with the population. According to O. Panchenkov, the scale of the project of the Ministry of Construction, Housing and Utilities "consistency will inevitably lead to the predominance of quantity over quality and form over content: the most important thing – what the project was created for – will disappear behind the words and figures used as a basis for reporting"<sup>7</sup>.

The creation of dual structures in the field of urban development is often not provided with resources, so there is a question about the effectiveness of their activities. Thus, the All-Russia People's Front inspection revealed the inefficiency of regional centers of competence in 28 constituent entities of the Russian Federation

<sup>7</sup> Panchenkov O. The same cities: what is wrong with the approach of the Russian authorities to landscaping. *RBK*. November 24, 2017. Available at: <https://www.rbc.ru/opinions/society/24/11/2017/5a17d5c59a7947545c001e90>

in 2019, the reasons for which were: understaffing due to insufficient funding; mismatch of attracted specialists with the planned amount of work; transfer of the focus of work performed by regional competence center from the development of the urban environment to the solution of specific tasks (for example, the issue of municipal solid waste)<sup>8</sup>.

Third, one should note the low level of involvement of citizens in the process of discussing urban development, and their lack of clearly articulated interests in this area.

*Expert 1: "We have the most active people – those who are dissatisfied with something. And when a good thing needs to be supported, everyone disappears. There is very little activity in this respect. As with Pirogov Boulevard, when you suggest: "People, come out, see what is fine with you, you will live here, this will be your place. There is no one there".*

*Expert 2: "Residents begin to come out only when something is already beginning to be done. When things are discussed, no one comes out".*

Studies of consumer demands and behavioral scenarios of citizens reveal discrepancies between residents' ideas of what they need in the adjacent territory, and what they use. *"Citizens simply overestimate their activity. For example, a third of those surveyed claimed to use free Wi-Fi in their yards. In fact, network connections were sporadic in summer and absent in winter. Many said: we want to do sports. At the same time, few came to sports grounds and courts"*<sup>9</sup>.

Fourth, there is no common vision for the development of the urban environment. In the project of the Ministry of Construction, Housing and Utilities it goes under the slogans "Everything starts with yards" and "Modern public areas".

<sup>8</sup> ONF monitoring: Competence centers work ineffectively in 28 regions. Available at: <https://onf.ru/2019/10/24/monitoring-onf-v-28-regionah-centry-kompetenciy-rabotayut-neeffektivno/>

<sup>9</sup> Why it is necessary to involve residents in the formation of the urban environment. *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 2020, October 14. Available at: <https://news.myseldon.com/ru/news/index/238978643>

Each urban project is developed in the context of the overall concept and is focused on the needs of residents, harmonizing the interests of different groups. Actually, citizens are actively involved only in the design projects of individual public areas, because most often the development of the city is interpreted by the municipal authorities as the development of public spaces, and the course of action and indicators in this case are formalized at the level of the state. *"We have no strategy or planning for new facilities"* (Saint Petersburg 2).

The projects carried out under the comfortable urban environment program provoke both positive and dissatisfied responses related to their monotony: *"If you follow the implementation of the comfortable urban environment program, think ten times before you ask to include the square in this program. They won't put lights there, but they will cut everything down and pave it with blocks. They will lay out flowerbeds, build playgrounds, put benches... In general, the square will not be a green area"* (Nizhny Novgorod).

Fifth, the result of joint action, such as the consolidation of the local community and the appropriation of territories, is not clearly visible.

*Expert 1: "And the city administration went to such an expensive project, despite the fact that our budget is not so good. They try to make it convenient, comfortable, beautiful, well-designed for citizens. And our citizens at the same time manage to break something, there is no proprietary attitude. Maybe it is the environment, maybe it's a problem of a culture that lacks a thrifty attitude".*

We conclude that **only the first two stages of civic participation are implemented on a large scale in practice**: informing and consulting. The main trends of citizen participation in the development of the urban environment are the allocation of target audiences and the design of public spaces according to their interests using various tools. Other stages of civic participation – partnership, delegation of authority – are not fully implemented. The pioneers

of participatory design in Russia, the founders of "Project group 8", N. Snigireva and D. Smirnov, point out that the process of citizen involvement becomes "streaming" formal in nature [37, p. 62].

### Discussion and conclusions

Undoubtedly, the production and change of urban space act as "an arena of coexistence of institutional and extra-institutional practices" [6, p. 103; 7, p. 448]. We show that the processes of typification, institutionalization, and legitimization elevate new forms of interaction and modify social roles and statuses to the rank of "habitual", with the direction of institutional change depending on the sociocultural context. The conclusions drawn about the mechanisms of transformation are consistent with the views of other researchers. For example, T. Burns and T. Diez show that in local communities the spread of individual local initiatives leads to the transformation of established institutional mechanisms and practices at the overall level [38].

In the processes of formation of civic participation practices initiated by activists or the state, similarities and differences stand out. Both processes (from below and from above) include the stages of "recognition of the legitimacy of social movements in the system of state power", "recognition of legitimacy in the mass consciousness", "spread of institutionalized forms of activity", but diverge as to the order of their passage. The processes also differ in the nature of institutional changes, actions and relations, the structure of political opportunities, and the passage of stages of civic participation (*Table*).

Institutional changes can be discrete or incremental, spontaneous or purposeful. Gradual changes are provided by incorporation into the trajectory of their previous development or the impact of a series of small events [39]. State intervention with the strategy of importing formal institutions can give a more discrete character to the process in the institutionalization from above.

**Characteristics of the processes of institutionalization of civic participation  
in the development of the urban environment in Russia**

Indicator name	Institutionalization from below without conflict of interest	Institutionalization from below in conflict of interest	Institutionalization from above
The nature of institutional changes	Incremental, spontaneous	Incremental, spontaneous	More discrete, targeted
The nature of the relationship	Asymmetrical	Asymmetrical	Symmetrical
The nature of action	Small-scale, independent	Both small-scale and large-scale, independent	Both small-scale and large-scale, institutional support
Type of institutional changes	Changes in terms of informal norms	Transformation of social institutions (formal and informal norms)	Reproduction of social institutions
Structure of political opportunities	Open	Closed. Possibly with a transition to open in the conditions of support for the actions of activists from the broad masses	Closed – for independent public associations; open – for those created by the authorities
Stages of civic participation	Implementation of all stages of participation up to "partnership" and "taking responsibility"	Residents are ready to take responsibility. The partnership stage can be realized in cases of widespread support before the partnership of government and citizens is replaced by "imitation of a dialogue"	Only the first two stages of civic participation are implemented on a large scale in practice: informing and advising. The other steps – partnership, delegation of authority – are not fully implemented

Source: own compilation.

In institutionalization from below changes are spontaneous, while in the formation of social practices from above changes in institutions have a purposeful nature.

Institutionalization from below without conflict of interest is accompanied by small-scale, independent actions. The nature of activist' actions in the presence of a conflict of interest remains independent, but their scale may be larger. In institutionalization from above, the actions of citizens have an institutional base.

The structure of political opportunities in the formation of social practices from below without a conflict of interest is open, but activists are most often independent of it. When there is a conflict of interest, the structure is closed, but when the actions of activists are supported by the broad masses, the transition to openness is possible. As we have already emphasized, in the institutionalization of civic participation from

above the structure of political opportunities is closed for independent public associations and open – for associations created by the authorities. The activists' resources include opportunities to enter the public space [8, p. 112].

Institutionalization from below without conflict of interest represents changes in the part of informal norms. In the presence of a conflict of interest, the content of the process of practices' formation consists in the transformation of social institutions (formal and informal norms). The formation of social practices from above in its essence is the reproduction of social institutions, but it is in the sphere of urban development that the process follows the type of "import of institutions", which is indirectly evidenced by its speed. N. Snigireva notes: "Such changes in Russia in two or three years is extremely fast. At the EDRA (Environmental Design Research Association) conference, we talked to representatives from

many countries, and they all said: "What happened in your country in such a short time took decades in our countries. And Henry Sanoff says there are countries where it will never happen in this format"<sup>10</sup>. E.A. Shuklina and M.V. Pevnaya are of the opinion that Russia is now actively formalizing social participation, but formal norms are outside the interest of young people [6, p. 104-105]. An empirical study of citizen involvement in the development of the urban environment in Saint Petersburg has drawn conclusions about the significant development of two levels of citizen involvement in the development of the urban environment: informing and consulting [40]. Other researchers do not exclude the existence of contradictions between civic initiatives and territorial macrodevelopment programs that reflect the interests of local authorities [7, p. 458].

Our results partially overlap with the data of A.A. Zhelnina and E.V. Tykanova, who consider the scenarios of urban conflicts development depending on the nature of players and arenas [32]. In this direction we see the further development of the study, namely the inclusion in the mechanisms of sustainable practices' formation of civic participation of the choice features of the arenas' configuration (situational and formal), the behavior of various players (both leaders and players embedded in the management systems).

So, the formation of social practices of civic participation in the development of the urban environment is realized in two directions: from below through habitualization or from above as an import of social institutions. The state, realizing the importance of the problem of the quality of life, comfortable and safe urban environment, formalizes and controls the actions of stakeholders. The loss

of the stages of "partnership" and "delegation of authority" in the process of institutionalization from above suggests the formal and imitative nature of practices of civic participation in urban development. Citizens are increasingly aware of the need to assert their rights to the territory, but further steps are needed to make the fashionable slogan "right to the city" a tool to consolidate the urban community, and "the created institutional structures would not turn from a means to an end, something self-sufficient" [41, p. 120]. It is necessary to consolidate the efforts of the government, which declares its interest in citizen involvement, and of activists whose collective actions make it possible to realize all stages of civic participation, abandoning the position that the institutional and extra-institutional arenas are opposed to each other.

Certainly, activists' accumulated experience contributes to the creation of civic infrastructures, but the weak involvement of the general public in social practices, the lack of support of initiative citizens from the population can further have a demotivating effect on the processes of civic participation.

Scientific novelty of the undertaken research lies in the definition of mechanisms for the formation of sustainable practices of citizen participation in the urban environment formation, the conclusions about the presence of two directions of processes: institutionalization from below in the form of habitualization and institutionalization from above. From the theoretical point of view, it is also quite significant to compare the main characteristics of the two types of institutionalization. The conclusions about the need to transfer the positive experience of activists and consolidate the efforts of institutional and non-institutional subjects of urban development are of practical importance. The results obtained complement the research conducted by the VolRC RAS staff on the directions of strategic urban development [42].

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<sup>10</sup> Participatory design: definition, history, and practice. *Institute for Urban Development of Bashkortostan*. Available at: <https://irgrb.ru/participation>

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## Appendix

Table 2. List of materials included in the analysis of texts

No.	Settlement	Topic	Source
1	Moscow 1	How to decorate the yard with flowers: Moscow residents grow front gardens on the adjacent territory	<a href="https://www.msk.kp.ru/daily/27028.4/4091424/">https://www.msk.kp.ru/daily/27028.4/4091424/</a>
2	Blagoveshchensk	"The most blooming yard" in Blagoveshchensk	<a href="https://www.amur.info/culture/2018/09/1/9157">https://www.amur.info/culture/2018/09/1/9157</a>
3	Yekaterinburg 1	Volunteers revived the historic garden in the city center in Yekaterinburg	<a href="https://varlamov.ru/4051916.html?utm_source=facebook.com&amp;utm_medium=social&amp;utm_campaign=problema-mnogih-rossiyskih-gorodov-v-tom">https://varlamov.ru/4051916.html?utm_source=facebook.com&amp;utm_medium=social&amp;utm_campaign=problema-mnogih-rossiyskih-gorodov-v-tom</a>
4	Moscow 2	How a century-old Moscow entrance hall is returned to its historical appearance	<a href="https://strelkamag.com/ru/article/potolok?utm_source=strelkamagt&amp;utm_medium=social&amp;utm_campaign=potolok">https://strelkamag.com/ru/article/potolok?utm_source=strelkamagt&amp;utm_medium=social&amp;utm_campaign=potolok</a>
5	Bogatoye settlement, Samara Oblast	Tom Sawyer fest: the rural area needed a hero	<a href="http://tsfest.ru/">http://tsfest.ru/</a>
6	Yekaterinburg 2	Church of St. Catherine construction	<a href="https://news.ru/society/mer-ekaterinburga-opros-vciom-o-hrame-nichego-ne-reshaet/">https://news.ru/society/mer-ekaterinburga-opros-vciom-o-hrame-nichego-ne-reshaet/</a>
7	Korolyov	Let's preserve the Ryabinov Park	<a href="https://vk.com/video-188873215_456239026?t=46s">https://vk.com/video-188873215_456239026?t=46s</a>
8	Nizhny Novgorod	Let's save the square in the Prioksky District	<a href="https://vk.com/save_prioksky_square_nn">https://vk.com/save_prioksky_square_nn</a>
9	Vologda	Against the project of improving the bank of the Vologda river embankment	<a href="https://vk.com/vologdareka">https://vk.com/vologdareka</a> <a href="http://vologdareka.tilda.ws/">http://vologdareka.tilda.ws/</a>
10	Saint Petersburg 1	Opposing the construction of Okhta Center	<a href="https://www.save-spb.ru/">https://www.save-spb.ru/</a>
11	Saint Petersburg 2	The "Trees of St. Petersburg" movement (Mariya Tinika)	<a href="https://vk.com/spbtree">https://vk.com/spbtree</a> <a href="https://luna-info.ru/discourse/derevya-peterburga/">https://luna-info.ru/discourse/derevya-peterburga/</a>

## Information about the Author

Elena O. Smoleva – Researcher, Vologda Research Center, Russian Academy of Sciences (56A, Gorky Street, Vologda, 160014, Russian Federation; e-mail: riolenas@rambler.ru)

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