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Modern social welfare in the light of the sustainability model

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Abstract

The paper presents the analysis of interaction between the social welfare and sustainable development. The aim of this paper is to show that the social development mostly depends on community values that form the pathway of the social movement. It is shown that mankind can influence the future choosing the optimum way of its development. Therefore, it is necessary to appreciate personal aspects of sociogenesis and a mechanism of its functioning, differences between social and natural dynamics. From the authors' viewpoint, a philosophical understanding of sustainability by means of welfare as a regulation mechanism, is one of approaches to the study of social life and social development. A model of socio-practical man's existence mostly oriented towards satisfaction of needs helps to analyze the relationship between the categories under review. The more so as an ordinary intake of consumer amenities transforms to the instrument of construction of social identity, the sociocultural integration of individual with society. Social welfare is presented as a multiple-factor construct represented by a synthesis of cause and effect. Explication technique, hermeneutical approach, and comparison study are used to clarify basic notions of this research.

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1. Introduction

The relevance of scientific interest to the problem of social welfare is currently conditioned by a shift of paradigms and principles of the quality of living assessment in terms of increasing instability of the modern world. Different research trends are unified by integrated factors and economic, socio-political and moral guides to the social development. The modern approach implies a search for a balance between the dominated economic and ignored cultural determinant approaches. In other words, it is a search for synthesis and integrated solution of contemporary problems rather than separation or superseding one by another.

Alvin Toffler is one of the first futurists who attracted the attention to the problem of social welfare and sustainability in his study of such survival strategy when 'the response to a future shock is not a stability but a

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change'. At that, the development of scientific scope 'threatens with the change of the production not only *how* but *why*' (Toffler, 2002).

In this content, the concept of welfare is directly connected with the idea of the sustainable development oriented towards the choice of solutions which create optimum proportions and equal opportunities for present and future generations judging from the safe character of measures taken for a prospective existence of mankind. Helen Clark, the convenor of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, also known as Rio+20, noted that 'justice, dignity, happiness, sustainability are significant for our life, however, absent in the GDP' (Rio+20, 2012).

Whitehead stated that 'civilization must regulate relational connections between people and the surrounding world in a way that will provide phenomena in which the dominant is the imperative harmony of stable things' (Whitehead, 1990). Is it possible to refer welfare to stable things?

For the answer, let us address to the problem of survival. In order to survive, the society must solve minimum three problems: to satisfy man's needs and develop the production; to provide the recovery of utilized resources; to pursue the policy of prevention and protection of socioeconomic turbulence from the inside. These problems can be solved in terms of interconnection between welfare and sustainability acting as basic values and ideas of human society.

2. Notions of welfare and sustainability

Aristotle was one of the first philosophers who noticed the diversity of understanding of the term *welfare* stipulated, first of all, by its multiple-factor construct represented by a synthesis of cause and effect. What is the relation and what are the cause and the effect of welfare?

Welfare cause lies in the necessity of overcoming a need for something, i.e. satisfaction of needs, whereas the effect is saturation and satisfaction from accomplishment. This interconnection is traced at the etymological level of a broad conceptual construct relating to the term *welfare* which includes the broad context of social existence. Social welfare is, concurrently, the objective and subjective phenomenon determined by everyday conditions of people's vital activity under which they satisfy their needs, implement plans and social expectations.

Traditionally, understanding of the term *welfare* is connected with the state of society which possesses all necessary facilities for life support. Objective and subjective properties of man's existence are described by many notions among which are such as satisfaction, life satisfaction, quality of living, welfare, happiness, etc. These understanding of the term *welfare* allows drawing a conclusion that it serves as a socio-personal ideal which can be achieved by specific means. A subjective personal component reflects the concrete historical tension and social aspirations to the social order, and is charged with a choice of many prospects relating to certain resources and technologies of achieving new desirable social conditions.

To summarize definitions stated above, three aspects can be emphasized in understanding of the notion *welfare*. First, it means satisfaction with the life and is connected with its standards. It is also a global assessment of the quality of living in conformity with social and personal criteria. In these terms, welfare is coincidence of satisfaction of needs and aspirations with really achieved ones or with what a person possesses in a real situation. Second, it implies the existence of a certain welfare standard. This understanding is 'recorded' in the requirements for moral life conditioned by the correspondence to the value system accepted in a certain culture at a certain historical age or time. Third, understanding of the welfare standard is further reflected by a subjective experience in reality that is fixed by the notion of *happiness*.

The term *sustainability* is a synthesis of concepts of changes and stability, and expresses real dialectical contradictions and a tendency to their harmonization as well. The ontological character of these contradictions is defined by the scope of social existence.

3. Social welfare as a factor of sustainability

Welfare implies a self-evidence of satisfaction of what a person or society possesses in a real situation because it means the obtainment of welfare that becomes possible due to external factors (subsistence resources, normalization of relationships, etc.) and internal factors (psychological emotions, assessment of welfare standards based on individual self-sentiment).

Social welfare is a complex integral indicator of the social sphere efficiency which reflects social health, welfare standard, quality of living, and social security of the society system. In this connection, social welfare is the most important indicator of stability comprising certain achievements and opportunities available in diverse vital activities of the individual and society as a whole, i.e. policy, economics, legislation, and so on.

Diversification of needs depending on different objective circumstances (historical time, governmental priorities, technological change, personal development) leads to instability of the social existence which is mostly evaluated just by social welfare, the indicator of a sustained interaction between man, society, and culture.

A society itself generates threats to the social welfare that is shown by the level of offences, social anomia, etc. A society with low living standards is forced to contradict with the ideas of sustainability because the absence of efficient technologies leads to the ineffective production. Therefore, in terms of deficiency of subsistence resources, a person has to think about his/her tomorrow rather than the others'. Thus, the growth of welfare and sustainability requires the control for social processes and relations oriented towards a formation of favourable social and economic conditions which can facilitate the achievement of welfare by both person and society using personal and societal labour. On this account, relations arising between people will not lead to socioeconomic turbulence from the inside.

The achievement and retention of a certain social state fixed by the notion *health* is important from the point of view of welfare. Erich Fromm suggested to apply the social analysis to the health criterion which was fixed in the category of *sane society*. Later, this concept was applied by Toffler in his book 'Future shock'. For Fromm, the answer to a question what society is sane is connected with moral traits of the individual and society as a whole, such as opportunity, responsibility, and obligation. A sane society is, first of all, a society in which nobody is a means towards an end of the other, but is rather the goal on oneself; a society in which nobody is used and uses oneself with the aim no to develop human capacities; a society in which a man is the central part, and his economic and political activities are directed to his own development; a society in which the individual is involved in social problems and solves them as his own; a society in which man's attitude to a neighbor is not separated from the entire self-other system (Fromm, 2005).

Socio-practical existence is multidimensional and formed by coordinates that meet the main types of people's vital activity and efforts, i.e. socio-ecological (reproduction), socio-economic (resource recovery), socio-cultural (living standard recovery), and many others. A speed of changes which take place in subsystems of social and human life should be maximally agreed. This agreement is possible merely with the availability of a certain safety zone or a damper capable of smoothing turbulences dangerous both for the society and the environment on the whole. A damper is created by ideas, community ideals and values which form the basis for the choice of specific actions. Social welfare is one of universal categories the ideas and implementation of which create this safety zone. In this capacity, welfare is a regulation mechanism. The concept of welfare is regulation of social tension and processes which reflects the integrating assessments of the quality of living and events in terms of a socialized individual included in the community of other people. And happiness of an individual depends on happiness of all other people that is proved by one of the eco-laws which runs that 'no joy can come from causing grief'. So, only orientation to the mutual achievement of welfare becomes the moral imperative of human life. And no matter, whomever mostly welfare depends from since it is already a shared responsibility. This mechanism is included in functioning of a civil society in the quality of social institution which expresses and protects personal interests in one's natural right 'everyone to his trade'.

The welfare assurance is provided by the civil society interested in the achievement and regulation of the balance between the private and the public. A civil society represents the moral and political method of organizing people in a community which demonstrates a phenomenon of autophagy, when people utilize themselves as a means of their survival, free choice and activity based on common values (Ivankina, 2013).

Being an artifact, social welfare is recorded in the system of believes, assessments, rationales, requirements, and values of axiological dominants in man's existence. In this quality, welfare is a kind of chronotope of the social development, a spatiotemporal characteristic of normative-regulatory transformations. Therefore, social welfare is a sociocultural policy directed to the establishment of axiological systems and norms that allow each person to feel safe.

4. Integrating or axiological basis for the welfare and sustainability relationship

A characteristic feature of modern civilization is a steady increase in production and consumption. Just in the 20th century, the fuel consumption increased almost 30 times, and the industrial production more than 50 times (Ryabchikov, 2002). At the same time, the problem of poverty and ill-being is still the most relevant. How to solve it? According to Fromm, it is necessary to be conscious of pathological events occurring in society and a wish to change the reality, and then real situation, values, and standards. In P. Sztompka's opinion, 'only by mutual agreement we can freeze some states important for our practical needs, treating them as single events, and speak of change or processes as the sequence of such frozen, 'discrete' points' (Sztompka, 1996). According to Le Chatelier's principle, a society must be in a state of dynamic equilibrium at which internal processes compensate external effects. When wishing well-being another person, what do we wish indeed? Certainly, good. A choice of good is the process of correlation between what we wish and what is really needed and valuable for an individual living in a society. Because welfare is an attractive image of what a man would like to possess. This broad understanding of welfare forms the broad spectrum of its types ranging from material subjects, food, things to diverse feelings and experiences. That is why the process of obtaining welfare is rather stable in its principle basis (mechanism of wants) and, at the same time, in the diversity of wants.

The hermeneutical approach can be used to analyze social welfare which states that it refers to a material substrate. A person who satisfies his/her needs, achieves welfare through a systems consumption of realias of the material and social world (things, food, cloths, etc.). Factors that affect social and personal welfare as well as its dynamics are arranged in conformity with levels of needs shown by Maslow's in his hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1999). According to this theory, a person is connected to its setting mostly by lower levels, and while moving upwards, he/she becomes dependable on its own ideology, sense and value systems. In this case, gratuitousness is possible, when a man does not expect a response from other people to his ideas, ideology, gratefulness, etc., since his/her enthusiasm, self-actualization, goal-achievement compensate the absence of other people's response. Inwardly, a person is free from compensation given by another person that is difficult to achieve at other levels. According to Maslow, it is necessary to appreciate the superior rather than the inferior because 'with increased personal responsibility for one's personal life and a rational set of values to guide one's choosing, people would begin to actively change the society in which they lived'.

A continuous stream of needs provides social welfare the level of which is dynamic and shifts to either increase or decrease of the level reached. Moreover, the stream of needs has effect on axiological purposes of man's provision with goods to the extent of his/her dependence on them. Potential capitalization of man and a tendency to goods as one of basic needs is supplemented with that to the establishment of strict requirements for man's behavior which include the internal moral improvement.

According to the law of the need growth, the level of individual and group aspirations increases, and constantly extends welfare boundaries which possess -- along with the universal concept welfare -- that ones achievable and possible for a given community in a given historical time.

Using the notion *welfare*, J. Habermas studied the idea of rationalization of actions. In his opinion, welfare is not available to a person who has no rationality, and it can be formed and conditioned both in the process of rationalization of one's own expectations and by rational interpretation of the environment (Habermas, 1995).

The methodology which unifies concepts of welfare and sustainability is the concept of the nature of social activities which are developed in the works of Garfinkel. He founded that understanding of the social life by individuals occurs not only from the outside by accepting common cultural standards and values as M. Weber and T. Parsons insisted, but also from the inside. In Garfinkel's opinion, the social order is the product of one's own spontaneous activity which is created by participants of the social interaction allowing for rules and knowledge of the given cultural setting learned before and fixed by the notion *tacit expectations* (Garfinkel, 1967).

Tacit expectations is the socially approved attitude to one or another actions observed by an individual and to which he/she assigns a rational meaning. This type of expectations are basic latent structures of social life that can be revealed by highlighting a certain aspect of multiple properties of their definition. These ideas are supported by Heimann who concluded back in the 30's of the 20th century that the quality of living are rather determined by purposes of those groups which a person considers to belong to than those he/she really belongs to.

As Albert Schweitzer states, the development of the concept of sustainability is directed to the acceptance of values oriented towards ‘reverence for life’. The original idea and the objective which unify social welfare and sustainability is man’s development as the criterion of social progress implemented by choice broadening, increase of life durability, level of education, income, etc.

Recognition, discovery of one’s own daemon (translated from Greek as ‘godlike power, fate, god’) and a further life organization in conformance with its laws is the foremost duty of each man from the moment of formation of civilization. Daemon comprises a reflectively critical man’s attitude to himself and the world on the whole or a sensitivity to the truth phenomenon, moral conscience or sensitivity to welfare phenomenon, aesthetic sensibility or sensitivity to the beauty (Mantatov, 2009).

A contravention of the principle of balance and proportion tends toward compensated justice, when the problem of the possibility of mankind existence by itself is sharply aggravated. Consensus achieved in social contacts does not accompany the activity, and requires a specific task and additional efforts for its accomplishment. To provide justice, it is necessary to form trust on the basis of positive personal and social purposes.

The process of the sustainable development is complex, and a necessity of the purpose change is the priority provided that mankind will learn how to create and sustain constructive relations. Stability imperatives include the system of values allowing to assure a choice of decisions in favour of optimum proportions of equal possibilities for life of present and future generations judging from the priority of the safe character of measures taken for a prospective existence of mankind. In this terms, the concept of sustainability can be defined as a growing-point for new worldview orientations. One of the steps taken in this direction, is to focus attention on the problem of social responsibility for making decisions and their further implementation both at the individual and group activity levels.

The model of determined chaos includes a stable structural order at a macro-level formed by discrete chaos at a micro-level. A prototype of micro-organization regularity is archetypical symbols of ‘labyrinth’ or the world tree in which a transition to a higher level of the order is connected with transition to the whole new (evolutionary) level. So, the social welfare as a cultural universality acts as a regulator of control for the order in chaos.

5. Conclusion

It is shown that regulation for welfare is an ontological concept that measures the social reality changing during the processes of the individual existence and acts in the capacity of the universal resource able to increase the degree of stability of the social object under conditions of uncertainty. Social welfare is a key factor of stabilization of social relations. Sustainability and welfare are interconnected processes unified by the principle of inter-complementarity.

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