

# Cultural Markers of Social Inequality in the Space of a Modern Metropolis (Part I)

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**Abstract:** Goal: to identify objective and subjective (perceived) markers of social inequality in the space of a modern metropolis using the example of Moscow. Research objectives: in connection with this goal, the following tasks are set in part I of this work: 1. to determine the essence of social inequality as a social phenomenon and its main manifestations; 2. to characterize cultural inequality as one of the forms of social inequality and its substantiation; 3. to identify the specifics of cultural consumption as one of the markers of cultural inequality in modern society. The subject of the research is cultural markers of social inequality in the space of a modern metropolis, studied using the example of Moscow. Methods: The theories of social inequality by K. Marx, M. Weber and T. Parsons, the theory of cultural consumption by P. Bourdieu, P. DiMaggio and R. Peterson, as well as the urbanistic theories of sociologists of the Chicago School (R. Park and others) were the pivotal theories for this study. The research method is based on qualitative methods, namely: in-depth interviews, as well as a method for mapping the urban space of the studied metropolis. Results: the results of an empirical study by the authors were compiled, which included a series of in-depth interviews with residents of Moscow of two different age categories (students aged 18 to 25 and married couples aged 35 to 55; the number of respondents from each group - 4 people, in total - 8 interviewees). Mapping of cultural sites of Moscow was performed on the basis of 2GIS electronic maps of Moscow, and analysis of secondary data taken from open sources (to be discussed in detail in Part II) was conducted. Conclusions: the main factor and cultural marker of social inequality in Moscow in the perception of the citizens is the uneven distribution of cultural sites across the city districts and unequal access to them.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The modern metropolis is a variety of different areas, where, along with elite new buildings and fashionable shops and business centers, there are architectural structures that have a century of history and are ranked among the monuments of urban culture. In every metropolis, there are also disadvantaged areas, where life is fundamentally different from what we see in the city center. Like the districts themselves, the people inhabiting them are noticeably different from each other: they belong to different strata of society, have different levels of income and status in society, and also have different levels of cultural

development. In sociological science, there are many studies devoted to the study of the dependence of the place of residence and the cultural level of an individual on his income. However, the question of the dependence of the cultural level on the place of residence is almost not studied by sociologists. The study examines many parameters of this problem, and also puts a hypothesis, which is partially proved and partially refuted empirically (during in-depth interviews with residents of different districts of Moscow), thus expanding the sociological view of the stereotypes established in the public consciousness on this issue and partly dispelling some of them. This work includes two areas that have repeatedly become

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the subject of study of sociological science: social inequality and urban studies. Among the main representatives who have studied social inequality are the following sociologists: E.B. Atkinson, N.L. Polyakova, N. Smelser, G. Therborn and others. The main representatives of the global urban theory are the founders of classical sociological theory, among whom are M. Weber and G. Simmel, as well as representatives of the Chicago School of Sociology, such as R. Park, E. Burgess, H. Zorbaugh, L. Wirth, A. Lefebvre, N. Hayner, P.G. Cressey, N. Anderson, R. Cavan and others. An important contribution to the study of the problems of the sociology of the city was made by sociologists of the Los Angeles School: M. Davis, E. Soya [1-17]. Inequality is an integral characteristic of any society, it is everywhere: one glance at others will be enough to understand that all people are different. Differences between people can be observed in many ways, such as gender, age, height, skin color, intelligence level, character traits, and so on. Some members of our society are born prettier, others smarter or stronger. Such differences are considered to be natural, since they are determined by the individual physiological and psychological characteristics of each individual person. Natural inequalities, although they are directly independent of the individual himself, nevertheless, can provoke the emergence of unequal relations with other members of society. The inequality that appears between people on the basis of their natural differences is considered to be the first form of inequality. However, in the context of considering human society, the key type of inequality is social inequality, which includes social differences between people in society. It is this type of inequality that is one of the most important aspects studied by sociologists and will serve as the foundation on which this study will be based.

## 2 METHODS

1. Cultural markers of social inequality in the space of a modern metropolis can be studied through the analysis of objective parameters and people's perception of cultural inequality, as well as the specifics of cultural consumption, which is a mechanism of social stratification that helps individuals to self-define, form their identity and influence their social status.
2. Areas of a metropolis are characterized by varying degrees of "culture", which can be determined by the following parameters: the appearance of the area, the development of the

infrastructure of the area and the average "portrait" of the population living in the area, as well as the presence of cultural and leisure facilities, which also include secondary schools and higher educational institutions. These characteristics are objective cultural markers of social inequality.

3. Despite the rather wide spread of cultural objects throughout the city of Moscow, the overwhelming majority of the most famous cultural institutions of the capital are concentrated in the central districts of the city, located within the Boulevard, Garden and Third Ring Roads (TRR), and partly in outside areas, but in close proximity to the TRR. Thus, we can talk about the presence of objective cultural markers of social inequality in the space of Moscow.
4. The subjective cultural markers of social inequality perceived by the inhabitants of the metropolis include a person's perception of the urban environment in which he lives, as well as the influence that this environment has on the formation of his personality and cultural level, what feelings and associations it evokes, and to what actions does the district, city and the surrounding society, with which he interacts, induce an individual.

## 3 RESULTS

The various levels of social development of people are the foundation for the formation of social inequality and the stratification of society (a stratum denotes a part of society to which people with equal levels of income, education, power and social prestige belong). Let us consider in more detail what exactly each of the listed parameters of social stratification means: income in this case means not only the monetary state that a person has, but also his property and labor, which can also "work" for him and influence the amount of cash receipts that he receives over a certain period of time; power is considered to be that a person has the ability to force other people to take any action, regardless of their immediate desire, in other words, the ability to literally "impose" their will on someone; education should be understood as a complex of knowledge that a person acquired in educational institutions, and it is possible to measure inequality in the educational aspect, first of all, by the number of years of education of an individual; and finally, the last parameter of social stratification - prestige determines the position of a

person in society, and the assessment of possessing a greater or lesser degree of prestige is formed through an established public opinion, which can vary in different countries, societies and social groups.

The problem of social inequality has always been one of the central topics studied by sociologists. Social inequality is a structured system of social relations, which is based on a hierarchical order that determines the place of social actors in society. Even the great philosophers of Ancient Greece, Plato and Aristotle, stated the fact of the division of society into rich and poor, but at the same time they pointed out the inadmissibility of "extreme wealth" and "extreme poverty", because they believed that this would lead society to instability. Plato explained the inequality of people in society by the inequality of their souls, on the basis of which, he believed that different functions are assigned to everyone, which are different in their complexity and significance. The French philosopher J.J. Rousseau believed that the division of society into rich and poor is the result of the emergence of private property, and the English thinker T. Hobbes considered the imperfection of some people in front of others to be the main reason for social stratification. In sociological science, the concept of social inequality, as a rule, is understood either as the structure and relations between classes, which differ from each other in certain characteristics, or as the structure and relations of status groups or strata, which also have a number of their characteristics. The relations between these classes, strata or status groups were based either on their unequal possession of power in any sphere of public life (political, economic, military or religious power), or were determined by a system of functional and professional division of labor. The basis for this understanding of social inequality was laid by K. Marx, M. Weber and T. Parsons. Accordingly, sociology distinguishes three different approaches to the study of the phenomenon of social inequality: Marxist, Weberian and T. Parsons structural functionalism theory. It is worth considering the fact that, in addition to methodological differences, the approaches were formulated in different time periods: for example, the Weberian approach to the analysis of social inequality arose already half a century after Karl Marx's class theory, and there is a "historical abyss" lasting a century between the approaches of T. Parsons and Karl Marx.

Let's take a closer look at each of these approaches. The key concept for describing social inequalities in Marxist theory is the analysis of these inequalities through "class". Classes constitute the structure of the hierarchy in the system of social

inequality, they differ in the methods of obtaining and the amount of income, the relation to ownership of the means of production, as well as their place in the general system of labor organization. These parameters are determining their place both in the general production system and directly in the hierarchical system on which social inequality is based. In the theory formulated by Karl Marx, classes are considered mainly in an economic and political vein, and the relations between these classes, respectively, can be characterized as relations of ownership and control. They, in general, have a production character, and the main essence of these class relations is exploitation. According to Karl Marx, any society in which there is private ownership of the means of production is divided into antagonistic classes: ruling and oppressed, exploiters and exploited. Thus, in the theory proposed by Karl Marx, the main and, in fact, the only factor having a direct impact on the emergence and formation of socially unequal strata or "classes" in society is the state of the economic situation in a given society. That is why Marxism cannot be regarded as a reference point for conducting a full analysis of the phenomenon of social inequality, since in the sociological aspect, the Marxist approach does not fully cover all the multifaceted nature of this concept and is a rather "one-sided" theory of social inequality. Marxist theory gave rise to the formation of other conflictological theories of social inequality, which also considered stratification as a result of interclass struggle. So, for example, according to the German sociologist R. Darendorf, the basis of social inequality was the unequal distribution of power. M. Weber considers social inequality from a different angle: social inequality, according to the sociologist, serves as the basis for the existence in society of a social order and the distribution of power between members of society, which, in turn, is realized with the help of "status groups", "classes" and "parties". Despite the fact that in both approaches – the Marxist and the Weberian - there is such a concept as "class", it is interpreted by the authors in different ways. So, if K. Marx considered class to be the key and only component of social inequality, then according to M. Weber, classes are only a reflection of the economic situation in society and are formed through the economic interests of people. In Weberian theory, along with classes in which relations are of a market nature, there are also "status groups", which, in turn, on the contrary, are opposed to the dominance of exclusively the market principle. The "status situation" described by M. Weber means "the assessment of social recognition". Unlike Karl Marx,

M. Weber does not share the opinion that the presence or absence of private property is a determining factor in a person's position in society. However, he does not deny that property refers to indicators of the status and prestige of an individual in the event that he owns it for a long time on an ongoing basis. Nevertheless, the status of a person in society, according to M. Weber, consists not only in the ownership of private property and financial resources: first of all, status implies the maintenance of a certain way of life by an individual or a social group for a long period, as well as the maintenance of those social interactions and relationships corresponding to a similar lifestyle. Achievement of financial well-being and any other goals of a “functional” nature is not a key indicator of prestige for the author. The confirmation of M. Weber's theory that money and property are not indicators of status and prestige can be illustrated by many examples from life, as well as books and cinema.

For example, in the movie “The Help” (a drama directed by Tate Taylor, released in 2011. A screen version of the novel of the same name by Kathryn Stockett. The action of the movie takes place in the 60s, in the USA, Mississippi. Racial conflicts and cruel behavior of the owners of the house in relation to black servants have become commonplace. The main character returns home after graduation. Most of all she wants to become a writer and escape from a small town into the big world. The girl decides to write a book called “The Help”. The basis for the work was the stories of the maids about their difficult life and the powerless position), which shows the period of the Black Civil Rights Movement in the United States in the 1960s. A vivid example of a wealthy lady, but nevertheless, “not a member of secular society” is a woman named Celia Foote. A “rootless” girl from a simple family who was lucky enough to marry a successful businessman, she lives in a luxurious house, next to all the “cream of society”, and although officially, mainly due to the status of her husband, who comes from an “elite” family, this woman has the opportunity to attend all the events held by ladies from high society, she never succeeds in becoming a part of this society. Moreover, marrying Celia negatively affects the “status situation” of her husband and his entire family. It is important to note that the economic situation of this family does not change at the same time: people can afford to have at their disposal a considerable amount of private property and the previous level of income. This situation is quite common not only in the cinematographic art and the

United States of America in the sixties - it can be observed in almost any state and at any time period.

A real life example can be the situation with immigrants who come to Russia, the United States and European countries from various cities and countries of the world in search of work, which is often quite difficult for these people to find in their homeland. In fact, after a certain period of stay in a particular state, as well as upon fulfillment of a number of requirements established by this state, each immigrant has the right to obtain the citizenship of this country. In addition, there are many examples when “newcomers” and immigrants achieve even more impressive career results that provide them with a decent financial position than most of the natives of the country. But, nevertheless, no impressive amount of income can automatically make these people more prestigious and influence their “entry into the elite”.

For a more vivid illustration of the absence of a direct relationship between the status situation of an individual and his monetary income, we can conduct a small comparative analysis of two people belonging to different social strata and having different monthly income. For example, we can compare two girls living and working in the city of Moscow, both girls are about 25 years old, while one of them is a native Muscovite, recently graduated from a prestigious capital university and works in a large international company at one of the starting positions, for example, “junior assistant in the personnel department” or “junior specialist in the PR department”, and her monthly salary varies from 50 to 60 thousand rubles (the data is based on an analysis of existing vacancies in such companies as advertising holdings Group M and ADV group, consulting companies like PwC, as well as large global FMCG companies, such as Nespresso, L'Oreal, Estee Lauder, and Russian oil and gas companies - Gazprom, Rosneft and many others.

The given data were systematized on the basis of data posted on the largest website optimizing job search in the Russian Federation and the CIS countries - hh.ru, as well as on the basis of information from the personal experience of the authors of this work); the other girl comes from one of the CIS countries, for example, from Moldova or Azerbaijan, where she graduated from college and received a secondary specialized education in legal specialty. However, she could not get a job in her specialty in her native country due to the lack of suitable vacancies and decided to graduate courses in the rather popular but non-intellectual profession “nail service master”. After graduating from the courses, the girl went to Moscow in order to have a



decent monthly salary, and at the moment her salary is on average from 70 to 100 thousand rubles per month (data on the wages of nail service masters is taken from the information portal The Village. [Electronic resource]: <https://www.the-village.ru/village/business/schet/294054-manikyurschitsy>). Thus, if we consider only the economic side of this situation, then the expatriate girl who works in a beauty salon is noticeably in the lead in comparison with the one who begins to build a career in a large corporation. Therefore, when analyzing her position on the social ladder based on the theory of Karl Marx, it can be stated that she occupies a higher position in society. However, turning to the approach proposed by M. Weber, which focuses our attention, first of all, on the "status situation" of a person in the social hierarchy and his social prestige, we come to a diametrically opposite conclusion after conducting a comparative analysis of two girls. Since the concept of a person's "status" in society is made up of the level of education, environment, as well as the presence of power in a particular area of public life, and the level of prestige is primarily determined by maintaining a certain way of life, we can without hesitation come to the conclusion that the "status situation" in which a girl who received a higher education at a prestigious Moscow University and is building a career in a large company with the possibility of further career prospects in this company and personal growth through constant communication in circles of successful people is on several orders of magnitude higher than the status of a beauty salon employee who currently has a higher monthly income.

Thus, the above example is a clear proof of the concept of M. Weber, who repeatedly emphasizes in his works that high financial position and private property do not determine the degree of prestige and status of an individual in society, but only serves as a kind of bonus for the image of its owner, provided that the person has an initial prestige status.

M. Weber's approach to the analysis of the phenomenon of social inequality was further developed in the theory of social stratification by T. Parsons. According to him, in order for social inequality to become legitimate, it must, first of all, be fair. The status of an individual, according to T. Parsons, can be determined based on the following six parameters: an individual's belonging to a certain affined system of relations, personal achievements, personal qualities, authority, property and power. The status situation of a person, therefore, is the sum, the result of all the above "terms", its components. Among other criteria that make up the status of a

person in society, T. Parsons also pays special attention to the presence of family ties and builds his "analytical approach to the theory of social stratification", based on R. Linton's concept of moving from inherited status to acquired status. According to T. Parsons, the class status of an individual in the system of social stratification, in general, consists of two main elements: a system of professional division of labor and a system of family ties. The professional labor system implies that class status is largely determined by a person's achievements in the professional sphere, and the kinship system means the fact that despite the widespread ideology of "equality of opportunity" in society, "there is a strong emphasis on the family ties". This means that the phenomenon when the presence of family ties can contribute to the growth of vertical social mobility of an individual in a professional environment can be quite frequent and widespread. In addition, T. Parsons explains the presence of status and economic inequality with a certain system of values that is unique for each society. For example, in the United States, the main value in society is considered to be the achievement of high results in business and building a successful career. Therefore, the highest status and income are held there by the heads of large corporations, owners of their own businesses, leading scientists and developers, mainly in the field of medicine and information technology. For most European countries, culture is the greatest value, therefore society honors and gives special prestige to people of humanitarian and creative professions.

We analyzed three main methodological approaches that laid the foundation in sociological science for the study and construction of further theories about the nature of social inequalities. It can be noted that each approach in some way complements the previous one and develops the previously stated thoughts on this problem (Polyakova, N. L., 2014; Soya, E. "Postmetropolis; Romanova, N. P.; Marx, K., Engels, F., 1968.; Darendorf, R., 1994; Weber, M., 1992; Parsons, T., 1992; Sorokin, P. A., 1992).

## 4 DISCUSSIONS

Inequality is an integral characteristic of any society, it is everywhere: one glance at others will be enough to understand that all people are different. Differences between people can be observed in many ways, such as gender, age, height, skin color, intelligence level, character traits, and so on. Some members of our

society are born prettier, others smarter or stronger. Such differences are considered to be natural, since they are determined by the individual physiological and psychological characteristics of each individual person. Natural inequalities, although they are directly independent of the individual himself, nevertheless, can provoke the emergence of unequal relations with other members of society. The inequality that appears between people on the basis of their natural differences is considered to be the first form of inequality. However, in the context of considering human society, the key type of inequality is social inequality, which includes social differences between people in society. It is this type of inequality that is one of the most important aspects studied by sociologists, and will serve as the foundation on which this study is based.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

Social differences arise under the influence of social factors, which include the way of life (rural or urban) of a particular individual or social group, the presence of a division of types of labor in society (mental or physical labor), as well as the social roles of people (brother, student, actor, civil servant, etc.). Social factors determine the differences between people in terms of education and income received by them, property ownership, the presence of power, and, as a consequence, the achievement of a certain social status and prestige. Karl Marx became the founder of the class approach to the study of social inequality and actually defined one of its most significant types and parameters of social stratification - income (a type of social inequality - income inequality). M. Weber, without denying the importance of the Marxist concept, supplemented it with another equally important component of the unequal position of members of society in a socio-hierarchical order - the "status situation", and also partially refuted the theory of Karl Marx that status is determined only by the amount of income and the presence of private property. The third and last fundamental methodological approach to the study of the phenomenon of social inequality considered in this work was proposed by the sociologist T. Parsons, who, taking the Weberian concept as a basis, supplemented it with the idea that the "status situation" of an individual in society is determined not only by the corresponding lifestyle, education and environment, but also his professional merits and, which is no less significant, the presence of family ties that contribute to his social mobility.

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