

EVALUATION

By the official opponent and member of the dissertation commission

Professor PhD Anatoli Bourmistrov

of Anna A. Mironova's dissertation "Strategic planning in the social management system of a large city", submitted for a candidate of social science degree, specialization 22.00.08 – sociology of management

I was examining the English version of the dissertation. The Anna A. Mironova's dissertation contains an introduction, 2 main chapters, conclusion, list of references and 5 appendixes (description of the methodology of research as well as list of informants and transcripts of 3 interviews), all together 257 pages. In addition, there are contents and the title page.

Introduction is a structured summary of the dissertation that describes relevance and the degree of elaboration of the research topic, the purpose and objective of the study, the theoretical and methodological bases of the study, the scientific novelty, the practical and theoretical significance as well as level of approbation. Author argues that there is a problem of insufficient attention to view and consequently to study urban strategic planning processes as a process of social interaction between participants of those who are supposed to be involved in the management practices of a large city. Relying on what seems to be extensive literature review of both Russian and foreign sources, the author further argues that "... there is a lack of scientific development in the field of strategic planning of urban development system concept from the perspective of social management ..." (p. 267). Therefore, the purpose of the study is to "... identify, substantiate and develop directions for the use of strategic planning in the system of a large city social management" (p. 267). Two hypotheses are formulated: 1) about the negative link between the level of social development in a city and problems of strategic planning and the level of stakeholder engagement, and 2) that the institutionalization of strategic planning can improve level of social management. To test the hypotheses, the author chooses eight research tasks that seemed to guide the research process. The theoretical and methodological bases of the study are briefly presented as well as key sources for the empirical material. A proposed model of a large city social development strategic planning constitutes the most important scientific novelty of the dissertation. Among other novelty aspects, it is also author's contribution with new interpretation of the concepts "strategic planning for the development of a large city" – that is organized "... through social interactions of participants in planning and management activities" (p. 271). Author further argues for the novelty by inclusion of Russian cities in international comparative research as well as observing the interlinks between the Soviet period model of departmental city management and the introduction of Western practices in Russia. The main provisions and conclusions of the dissertation were presented and discussed at national and international conferences. There are 13 publications that author claims to be related to the dissertation.

Chapter 1 highlights theoretical and methodological bases for the research. First of all, it includes a historical overview of different definitions of a city as a concept in different literature. This overview is thorough and interesting. Author convincingly argues that the city should be considered from a social constructionist perspective as a social system with a self-developing integrity. The author then criticizes Russian theoretical discussion and proposes new trajectories for the study of the city as a social system. Own definition of the "large city" is proposed. Further, the author analyses concepts of strategic planning based on Russian and foreign literature sources and argues for choice

of strategic planning aimed at solving social-economic development linking the goals of social development with resources. This part is followed by an analysis of foreign and domestic experience in a large city development. The main argument is that strategic planning for large cities in Russia in general has low level of instrumentality, poor elaboration implementation mechanisms as well as low degree of stakeholder involvement. As a summary, the author calls for a strategic planning process that would allow for institutionalization of social interactions of participants in planning and management activities.

Chapter 2 is devoted to description of problems and potential of using ideas of social management for the strategic planning in a large city. The author presents description of the methodology for and analysis of own empirical work based on a survey and interviews with practitioners. Strategic planning in Russian large cities viewed as a social process is argued to face regulatory, methodological, personnel, organization and information problems. Those problems are then analyzed in depth through the prism of interviews with practitioners where several important nuances are added in terms of what the perceived problems and potential solutions are for implementation of strategic planning for the development of a large city. This is a most interesting chapter because it adds valuable insights from practitioners. In the final part of the chapter, author develops and proposes the own model for of a large city social development strategic planning.

In the conclusion chapter, author summarizes the main elements of the study and forms several conclusions.

In my opinion, the dissertation is timely and of importance for the Russian academic and practical audience. Application of sociology of management to the issues of strategic planning in the Russian large cities without doubt warrants more attention and research in this area. The dissertation shows that Anna A. Mironova has a broad knowledge of main directions of strategic planning and sociology of management literature and that she is capable of doing research within different empirical settings. The strong side of the dissertation is that it gives insight into the difficult and important research context of Russian large city planning system and problems that are experienced by the city planners. We know it is not easy to obtain access to such empirical material, and that the empirical studies carried out by Anna A. Mironova are much demanding. The thesis, therefore, can contribute to the development of new ideas in the Russian academic and practical world about how the strategic planning in the large cities can be improved by incorporating sociology of management ideas. The empirical results of the dissertation are interesting and, with further work, can warrant publications in international academic journals.

As in any dissertation, there are some aspects of the dissertation that can be criticized and could have been better developed. There are several important issues in this respect:

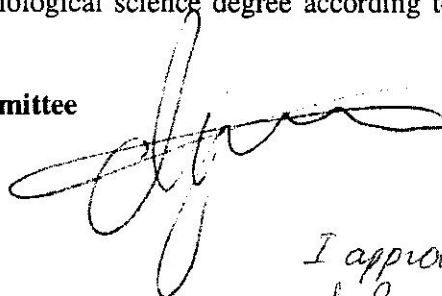
1. **The interconnections between the different parts of the thesis is not well elaborated.** The structure of the thesis could have benefited from a clearer division of different elements of the study and a clearer indication of the logic why different elements of the study presented like they do. On a similar note, the hypotheses, formulated in the first part of the study, are not addressed in the later parts of the study. Though objectives of the study seems to be achieved, are hypothesis confirmed or not?

2. **Review of strategic planning and sociology of management literature is outdated and does not include most recent Western research literature.** The reference list is unbalanced where more than 50% of Russian sources published after 2005 while more than 80% of Western literature analyzed is published before 2000. Such scientific direction as public governance, participatory practices, hybrid organization (e.g. to examine nature of private-public partnerships) are not well analyzed and documented in the dissertation. Unfortunately, author misses almost two decades of development in the western academic word. Rather than relying on western classics, a more thorough selection of recent western academic literature would have contributed to more nuanced contribution. For instance, my readings of publications in western journals indicate that opening up for broad stakeholder engagement and elements of participatory governance create own problems of managing conflicts, power games and dialogic traps. In this sense, the proposed model, though it can be a good point for the discussion of the basic elements in the strategic planning of social development of a large city, is rather idealized.
3. **Declarative nature of analysis and conclusions.** I found it problematic that throughout the dissertation Western practices seems to be idealized while Russian practices claimed almost as only problematic. I cannot find evidence for why is this the case. The similar argument applies especially to chapter 2.3 where author proposes the main directions of the use of strategic planning in a large city system of social management. The text is normative and declarative. In judging many proposals and claims made by the author, I very often miss references to literature or to concrete problems to be solved that were indicated in previous subchapters.
4. **The context of the large city is almost invisible.** I find it surprising that throughout the dissertation the reader learns very little what the problems of a larger city are beyond that it has large number of inhabitants, taking care of key industries and agglomeration problem. Given the topic of the dissertation, I had an expectation that problems of a larger city would have being described in a deeper and more conceptual way.

As a whole, the strongest contribution concerns empirical material and description of strategic planning problems of cities which is presented concerning the hitherto poorly understood but highly important context of Russia. The dissertation of Anna A. Mironova's clearly defines the scientific problem and, thought the literature review and empirical work, proposes a solution in terms of a model of a large city social development strategic planning based on the ideas of social management. The purpose of the dissertation seems to be achieved by the candidate. In this sense, the dissertation of Anna A Mironova with a title "Strategic planning in the social management system of a large city" satisfies the requirement of the Order from 01.09.2016 № 6821/1 "On the Procedure for Awarding Academic Degrees at St Petersburg State University". The applicant Anna A. Mironova can be awarded candidate of sociological science degree according to specialization 22.00.08 – sociology of management.

Member of the dissertation committee
PhD, professor

27.10.19



Anatoli Bourmistrov

*I approve the signature
of Professor Anatoli
Bourmistrov*