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**Kolenda N. V.**

Lesya Ukrainka Eastern European National University

#### **SOCIAL POTENTIAL: ESSENCE AND MAIN SIGNS**

The approaches to the interpretation of the essence of the concept of «potential» are considered. Explored and given the definition of the category «social». On the basis of summarizing the prevailing author interpretation of the concept of «social potential» and justified its main features.

**Key words:** potential, social, social potential, capital, individual.

**Problem statement.** Modern society development is characterized by a number of social risks and threats that reduce the social security level which is a component of the national security of the state. Along with that, we are of opinion that the social security of a person, enterprise or state should be based upon the available and appropriate social potential that is to be built-up by actions of the managerial government agencies of various levels, the public and each individual.

However, in order to develop approaches to the social potential build-up, it is required, above all, to study in detail this concept and understand its essential properties.

**Analysis of latest studies and publications.** This potential was studied by a number of domestic and foreign scientists such as A. Abalkin, V. Avdeyenko, I. Ansoff, O. Arefyeva, V. Arkhipov, R. Belousov, I. Buz'ko, A. Voronkova, F. Yevdokimov, G. Kleiner, L. Kovalska, N. Krasnokutska, Ye. Lapin, R. Marushkov, O. Mizina, S. Mochernyi, G. Odintsova, O. Oleksyuk, I. Otenko, Ye. Popov, I. Repina, G. Seleznyova, M. Starovoitov, O. Fedonin, P. Fomin, M. Chukhray, D. Shevchenko et al. These researchers have studied in sufficient detail the «potential» category, however, by now we still did not formulate a single approach to its representation.

**Highlighting parts of the general problem that have not been solved earlier.** It is worthwhile to note that a series of new concepts appear in the scientific environment today and their formulation makes use of such economic categories as «capital» and «potential». This is a gnoseologically positive process indicating that the convergence of social and economic sciences is on-going and this fact compels scientists to make still another attempt to specify the categories of «capital» and «potential» as well as include such phenomena as social potential and social capital in the subject matter of research.

Nowadays the analysis of these concepts makes an important and complex scientific problem because a considerable number of scientists believe that they are identical. In its turn, having studied the available scientific bibliography, we choose the opposite position and separate these concepts, though we do assert that they are interrelated. Besides, the complexity of «the social potential» category and its scientific novelty necessitate that this paper clarifies such concepts as potential, the societal and societal capital. A study of

the social potential becomes still more complicated because this phenomenon is viewed at micro, macro and local levels.

**Objective of the paper.** The main objective of this paper is to determine the essence of the concept «social potential» and its principal signs.

**Presentation of the basic material.** Some scientists analysed the evolution of the «potential» concept and claim that its use in the economic science was linked to the development, in the 20-ies of the last century, of the problems associated with assessing the level of production forces development [1, p. 5].

There exist an idea, as well, that the current economic science has borrowed the term «potential» from physics where it means the amount of energy accumulated by a system that can be used for making some work [2, c. 8].

The etymology of the term «potential» comes from the Latin word «potential» which is translated into English as «force» or «latent opportunities». The defining dictionary of Ukrainian language explains this term as «latent abilities, capacity, efforts required for activities that may be revealed under certain circumstances» [3]. The Soviet encyclopaedic dictionary regards «potential» as «potential function that characterizes a wide class of physical fields of force (electrical, gravity, etc.); as sources, opportunities, means and resources that can be used for solving some tasks or achieving some objective; as capacities of an individual, society and state in a certain field» [4, p. 1046]. The Small Dictionary of Economy treats the term «potential» as the aggregate of available resources or opportunities in any field» [5, p. 482].

Domestic and foreign scientists more often than not view the term «potential» as opportunities, available forces, resources and means that can be used in production activities, to satisfy customers' needs and reach social effects under certain favourable circumstances [6-8].

While considering the evolution of the «potential» concept it is worthwhile to recollect the works of V. Voblyi [9] who defines the potential of productive forces as potential opportunities of a country to produce material values to meet the population needs. Certain specifications were made by W. Weitz [10], namely that the potential of productive forces includes not only certain material elements but also the material conditions. That is, he emphasized that the potential can realize its opportunities provided there exist certain favourable conditions.

With a course of time a group of scientists was established who asserted that the potential is an aggregate of various resources required for functioning and development of the system. We are of opinion that the deficiency of the «potential» concept is its link to resources when only an aggregate of certain resources was meant and the conditions of their use were not taken into consideration. L. Abalkin [11] drew attention to that fact having commented that the potential and resources are quite different notions. He believes that the potential is a generalized characteristic of resources linked to a place and time. He accentuated the conditions of use of certain resources and singled out the location and time of their use. Another direction of studies considers potential as an ability of a set of resources of the economic system to perform the set tasks [12, p. 6].

So, the analysis of the first representations of the «potential» concept allows of separating three approaches: resource approach (when resources make the basis of the potential), factorial approach (when the potential can be realized under certain conditions only) and target-oriented approach (when realization of the potential is directed at achievement of preset tasks).

Consolidation of the applied approaches to definition of the essence of this concept was made by M. Ignatenko and V. Rudenko. They established that in 42% of cases the use of this term means the aggregate of natural conditions and resources, opportunities, stocks, means and values; in 16% of cases it is production capacities, funds, wealth, resources and economic and natural conditions of the region; in 8% of cases the term «potential» is an ability of productive forces to reach a certain effect; in 5% of cases this is a potential of natural resources and business development; and in 11% of cases it is productivity and effect of the natural wealth.

O. Shabliy arranged into groups the approaches to definitions of «potential» in accordance with three characteristic features: carrier – property – relation. At that, the first feature can be described as the aggregate of conditions, i.e. it reflects the nominal aspect of the potential; the second feature reflects the attributive aspect and characterizes qualitative and quantitative properties of the «potential» including such meanings as «capacity», «opportunity», «ability». The third feature is of a relative nature and includes only the sixth of the listed approaches that reflects «productivity». This approach characterizes the relations between the potential and its use, which, in its turn, is a differential characteristic of its efficiency [14, p. 104].

The analysis of scientific sources enabled to separate the approaches to the representation of the «potential» concept. It should be noted that by now the scientists highlighted three approaches in the development of current apprehension of such concepts as «potential»: resource-oriented, socially-oriented and performance approaches. We propose to single out the objective, related to resources, factorial, target-oriented, social-oriented and combined approaches.

Representatives of the objective approach: R. A. Belousov, K. G. Voblyi, I.O. Djain, N.S. Krasnokutskaya, O.I. Oleksyuk, I.M. Repina, O.S. Fedonin et al. represent «potential» as potential or available opportunities of an enterprise (or society) that ensure achievement of the set objective. Such approach rests upon K. Marx statement that the instruments of labour, subject of labour and workforce, being factors of production and elements that make new products, present the opportunities, which emphasizes their potential nature [15].

Representatives of the resource-oriented approach: L.I. Abalkin, V.M. Avdeyenko, A.I. Anchyshkin, V.M. Arkhipov, A.Ye. Voronkova, L.A. Kostyrko, V.A. Kotlov, I.I. Lukinov, S.V. Mochernyi, I.M. Repina, Ye B. Figurnov, D.O. Chernikov, D.K. Shevchenko and S.S. Shumska characterize the potential as the aggregate of available or potential resources of a system. We believe that the resource-oriented concept is the basic one for developing presentations referring «potential» concept. It is this system that makes the basis for developing other concepts and approaches to the definition, understanding and representation of the essence of «potential» as an economic category.

The factorial approach was developed by W. Weitz, Z.V. Gerasymchuk, G.B. Kleinrm L.L. Kovalska, N.V. Kolenda and L.M. Cherchyk who define potential not just like available opportunities but also as the conditions and factors that facilitate its efficient accomplishment.

Representatives of the target-oriented approach: O.N. Volkova, I.Z. Dolzhanska, T.O. Zagorna, V.V. Kovalyov, Ye.V. Lapin, R.V. Marushkov, B.M. Mochalov, G.S. Odintsova, L.D. Revutskyi, G.A. Seleznyova and L.S. Sosnenko view potential as an ability of the system to perform the preset tasks.

The social-oriented approach treats the potential as an aggregate of relations that are formed within the labour collective or the characteristics proper of this collective. This approach is promoted by S.G. Rad'ko, L.I. Samoukin, M.K. Starovoitov and P.A. Fomin.

Representatives of the combined approach: V.M. Arkhangelskyi, I.V. Bakulin, O.O. Get'man, F.I. Yevdokimov, O.V. Mizina, I.P. Otenko, V.I. Khomyakov and V.M. Shapoval do not have a clear-cut direction in treating the concept of «potential», therefore their vision may not be referred to anyone of the above considered approaches. In the majority of instances their definitions combine the resource-oriented, objective and target-oriented approaches.

Long and wide debates can be held regarding correctness and scientific substantiation of the considered concepts; however, we shall remain within the limits of our analysis. By way of generalization we may note that nowadays the scientists consider «potential» concept in the majority of cases along the lines of the objective, target-oriented or combined approach. Social-oriented approach is applied today for the representation of the essence of a labour or human potential, and its application for the defining the essence of the «potential» category does not allow to cover the contents of this concept. Generally, if one analyses the submitted representations of the «potential» concept, the following comments can be made:

- resources or their system make an integral part of the representation of the «potential» concept;
- formation and use of the potential suggests availability of the appropriate conditions;
- potential is a characteristics of the evident and latent opportunities;
- accomplishment of the potential should always be target-oriented.

Thus, after generalizing scientific representations and having considered the determined characteristics, we are of opinion that the «potential» concept that a certain object (person, family, labour collective, region, society in general) possesses opportunities, both evident and latent, that are accomplished upon certain conditions are met, as well as the abilities to act in the appropriate spheres with a view of getting the desired result.

A study of theoretical and methodological basics of the social potential is impossible without studying the category of «the societal». This is due to the fact, first of all, that no single and correct definition of this concept was formed in many scientific spheres, including the economy. Also, by now and quite often some scientists think that the concepts «the societal, societal» and «the public, public» mean the same. Such viewpoint is more common to the scientists of sociology. However, any system of social relations (economical,

political, etc.) is based, above all, on the relations among people and their attitude to the society on the whole. Therefore each system always contains a societal aspect. When the problem of representing «the societal» is considered, attention is paid to the fact that the societal is an effect of the common that arises because of a conscious interaction of individuals. Still, the common exists in a herd mentality of animals or in insect families [16].

In order to better understand the essence of «the societal» and distinguish it from «the public» concept, it is necessary to refer to works of K. Marx and F. Engels. In particular, these scientists analysed the society, processes and relations in them and used two concepts - «public» (*gesel/schaftlich*) and «social» (*soziale*). Marx and Engels applied the concepts of «public», «public relations» when writing about the society in general and about the interaction of their aspects – economical, political and ideological. Whenever they referred to relations among people, their attitudes to factors and conditions of life, their place and roles in the society and their attitude to the society in general, Marx and Engels used the concepts of «the social» and, correspondingly, talked about «social relations» [15].

Also, Marx and Engels sometimes equated the concept «the social» with the concept «civil». They used the latter term to characterize interrelations between people belonging to a specific social group (family, labour collective) and the society in general. As far as Marx and Engels, when developing the society theory, paid major attention to interactions of all sides, which result in vital activity of the society, in particular to public relations, some Marxist scientists became to equate the concepts of «public» and «social»; the concept of «civil society» gradually dropped out of scientific use [16].

The other situation formed itself in the Western Europe countries and in the USA where empiric sociology acquired considerable development. As a result, the French and English languages conventionally used the concept «public», that comes from the concept «society», in its narrow empiric meaning which gave rise to the advent of known problems when defining phenomena and processes that concern the society on the whole. It is because of that the concept «societal» was introduced at a certain stage of the sociology development, and this term is being used to characterize the whole society, i.e. the entire system of societal relations (economic, social and political, etc.).

The domestic science also lacks a clear distinction between the concepts of «the societal» and «social» which is also connected, to some extent, with the existing language traditions. In Ukrainian language there are two concepts - «societal» and «communal». At that, the concept «societal» is considered to be a synonym of «the societal» and is more often used in sociology while the concept «communal» is used in legal sciences. Gradually, as the sociology develops the concept «social» acquired its independent meaning.

Today, scientists give the following representations of the social:

- this is an aggregate of societal relations of this society which is integrated in the course of common activity (interaction) of the individuals or groups of individuals under specific conditions of place and time [16];
- this is the result of common activity of various individuals which manifests itself in the course of their communication and interaction;

- the social arises in the course of interaction of people and is determined by diversity of their place and role in specific societal structures which is revealed, in its turn, in a diversity of attitudes of such individuals and groups of individuals to phenomena and processes of the societal life;

- this is an aggregate of certain features and peculiarities of societal relations which is integrated by individuals or communities in the course of common activity under specific circumstances and is manifested in their relations, attitudes to their place in the society, and to phenomena and processes of the societal life [17].

According to Maximilian Weber, the social is a so-called expectation, i.e. orientation to the other, to a corresponding reaction. G.V. Osypov considers that the social is an aggregate of any properties and peculiar features of societal relations that are formed by individuals or communities in the course of common activity and under specific circumstances, and reveal themselves in their reciprocal attitudes, attitudes to their status in the society and to the phenomena and processes of societal life. The social arises when the behaviour of an individual comes under influence of another individual (group of individuals) either directly or indirectly. It is in the process of interaction that each of them becomes a carrier and exponent of social properties that are the subject matter of a sociological study [16].

Alan G. Johnson makes use of a good comparison for interpreting the term «social». He is convinced that absolutely all people need food, however this need does not make them social. Cultural ideas that influence the selection what to eat and how and when to eat, make these aspects of food social. In a similar way famine, starvation and satiety are not social if they involve billions of people. However, economical, political and other social agreements that provide for distribution of wealth, profits and access to food add a deep social meaning to these human needs [17]. Also, there is thinking that the social is present where there are four components: humanitarian (meaning the human factor which is indispensable for existence of the society), information (availability of social information), organizational (order and arrangement of social relations) and material (availability of the material carrier of social relations). In so doing, the humanitarian is linked to employment and the social is a result (product) of the past and present occupation of a person. Here the life occupation and not work employment of an individual is meant, i.e. that one which ensures reproduction.

Taking into consideration the above, it is necessary to differentiate the concept of «the social» in its wide and narrow meanings. Widely «the social» means everything that belongs to the society. In the narrow meaning «the social» involves only those aspects of the societal that are determined by a state of people within a social structure of the society, by relations among social groups and people who represent different classes, nations, labour collectives, professional and qualification, and other social groups [16].

Thus, it can be concluded that the social manifests itself most widely in our attitude to each other, to the place which we occupy in the society as well as to those phenomena that take place in the society. The social is revealed everywhere where an action of one person is correlated with the action of another person.



So, the essence of the concept «the social» is reduced to the following: interaction is the necessary condition of the advent of the social; presence of the material carrier of societal relations; presence of at least two subjects between whom interaction is possible; a benefit for all subjects of societal relations, and not for an individual, is the result of interaction.

Consequently, we propose that the social means a qualitative characteristic which is formed in the course of common activity among individuals or groups of individuals, and results from societal relations which, under certain conditions, express the attitude of individuals to each other, to their status in the society, to the phenomena and processes of the societal life.

**Conclusions and proposals.** Generalization of the approaches to interpreting the concepts «potential» and «social» makes it possible to formulate a definition of the social potential. Thus, we propose that the social potential means the opportunities of a defined subject (person, family, labour collective, region, society as a whole), both evident and latent, that are formed among individuals or groups of individuals in the course of common activity, and result from societal relations which, under certain conditions, express attitudes of individuals to each other, their status in the society and the phenomena and processes of common life, and are accomplished under appropriate circumstances, as well as the abilities to act in appropriate spheres with a view of achieving the desired result.

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**Коленда Н. В.**

Східноєвропейський національний університет імені Лесі Українки

### **СОЦІАЛЬНИЙ ПОТЕНЦІАЛ: СУТНІСТЬ ТА ОСНОВНІ ОЗНАКИ**

**Резюме**

Розглянуто підходи до трактування сутності поняття «потенціал». Досліджено та дано визначення категорії «соціальне». На основі узагальнення сформоване авторське трактування поняття «соціальний потенціал» та обґрунтовані його основні ознаки.

**Ключові слова:** потенціал, соціальне, соціальний потенціал, капітал, індивід.

**Коленда Н. В.**

Восточноевропейский национальный университет имени Леси Украинки

### **СОЦИАЛЬНЫЙ ПОТЕНЦИАЛ: СУЩНОСТЬ И ОСНОВНЫЕ ПРИЗНАКИ**

**Резюме**

Рассмотрены подходы к трактовке сущности понятия «потенциал». Исследовано и дано определение категории «социальное». На основе обобщения сформировано авторская трактовка понятия «социальный потенциал» и обоснованы его основные признаки.

**Ключевые слова:** потенциал, социальное, социальный потенциал, капитал, индивид.