



SOCIO-ECONOMIC ESSENCE OF INFRASTRUCTURE

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Abstract: The article reveals the socio-economic nature of infrastructures. Theoretical interpretations of infrastructure activities are presented. The activities of the system of infrastructures serving business entities are disclosed.

Key words: infrastructure, social infrastructure, types of infrastructure, service system.

Infrastructure is a very broad concept, which is primarily related to the creation of services that serve the production process from all sides.

The issue of infrastructures occupies a special place in the system of modern economic sciences. In particular, the concept of "infrastructure" appeared in the western economic literature at the end of the 40s of the last century. The need to study its place as an independent system of the economy is, on the one hand, the fact that the infrastructures were formed as a result of the deepening of the modern division of labor, and on the other hand, the infrastructures, like the entire economy, could not develop only by the influence of market mechanisms, but were formed due to the fact that special attention of the state is required for it.

The nature of production relations implemented in the infrastructure system has given rise to different definitions of this concept. That is, production in the system of infrastructures - services, unlike material production, takes place at the same time as production and consumption relations. Also, the value created in the system is not formed directly in the form of goods or profits, but is formed indirectly in the final product of material production. In social, household, and market forms of infrastructures, this process passes a more complex "distance", and in some of them (social and household infrastructures), the value created is through the reproduction of labor power, and in some (market and household infrastructures), it is created through the reproduction of resources, production capacities and manifested in the system of market mechanisms.

That is why, when defining the concept of infrastructure, some researchers evaluate it as "society's expenses" that are not directly related to the form of goods and production processes, as well as do not bring direct benefits (or income) to the producer, while some researchers consider it as a means of ensuring the implementation and efficiency of production. they recognize that it is a complex of necessary conditions (roads and communications network, means of transport and transportation, land construction, etc.). According to this group of researchers, the effective organization of the infrastructure system allows to reduce the costs of enterprises in the market economy, facilitate the process of capital movement, increase the level of demand and employment at the level of society, as well as increase the profit rate.

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There is a multi-layered approach to the description of infrastructures in modern foreign, in particular, US and Western European economic literature. In particular, at the macroeconomic level, infrastructures are capital structures and systems used by citizens and enterprises and usually organized by the state. These include highways, bridges, urban transportation systems, water treatment facilities, municipal water supply systems, train stations, and airports.

Enterprises or micro-level infrastructures include services and facilities that are strictly necessary and necessary in the process of product production, and at the same time, it is too expensive to build with one's own strength and capabilities, therefore, they are organized by the state and other specialized enterprises. They include water supply, electricity, industrial waste removal, freight transportation, scientific research and design-construction works, banking and financial services, etc.¹.

Just like in the Western economic research system, there is no single, common view of infrastructures in the scientific works of a number of scientists from near abroad, including Russia, and also in national research. In particular, according to some Russian scientists, infrastructures are auxiliary, supporting sectors of production and non-production sectors².

The Russian scientist I.F. Chernyavsky uses a somewhat complicated position in describing infrastructures and gives a high value to the "image" of this field. According to him, "Infrastructures are roads, canals, water structures, ports, bridges, airports and railway stations, warehouses and power supply facilities, communications, water supply and sewerage, education, science, health, etc. is a complex of independent branches of the national economy that provide services to industrial and agricultural production"³

Such definitions are based on the role of infrastructures as a type of ancillary activity that serves an essentially primary object common to all descriptions given to it.

It should be noted here that the variety of descriptions given to infrastructures is often influenced by the tendency to provide leadership of the researched object or field of activity. That is, in some research studies, the role of infrastructures in the relations taking place in them is studied in the process of studying the material production sector, and in this, infrastructures are naturally evaluated as a branch (or auxiliary) sector.

Some researchers, although they study the infrastructure itself or its specific direction, in most cases they connect it either to the level of a certain area, region, or within an economic period or to the level of a system of relations. And this causes the above-mentioned situation, infrastructures to be evaluated as an object or one of such elements, on which the attention of the state economic policy is focused or economic relations are applied.

¹ Макконнелл Кэмпбелл Р., Брю Стэнли Л. Экономикс: Принципы, проблемы и политика. В 2 т.: Пер. с англ. 11-го изд. Т.2 – М., Республика, 1992. - 400с.

² Гукова А.В. Производственная инфраструктура в экономике региона. – М., "Экономика", 2001 г. -235 с.

³ Чернявский И.Ф. Инфраструктура сельскохозяйственного производства: (Вопросы, теории и практики). – М., Экономика, 1979. – 232 с.



Production relations in the infrastructure system are manifested in the form of providing services and performing works. Accordingly, as noted above, service provision is considered an important form of economic activity, and unlike the concept of product production, labor spent in service provision is sold directly in the production process itself. This, in turn, makes the organization of economic activity in the system somewhat simpler and cheaper. The system does not require large amounts of fixed and working capital.

Expressing the concept of service from an economic point of view, we imagine the result of this activity as a commodity. As a result of service activities, personal and general needs of consumers are satisfied. First of all, satisfaction of needs here means changing the physical, economic, and moral condition of the consumer, that is, during the service activity or as a result, the producer changes the physical and moral condition of the consumer, mood.

At the same time, sports and activities aimed at satisfying physiological needs are not included in the service. Because, in both cases, the main labor is required from the consumer himself. In both cases, the consumer does not buy any value, but spends his labor for himself, to ensure his physical fitness, normal physiological condition.

The service system is classified in international practice as follows:

1. Communal services and construction;
2. Wholesale and retail trade, catering, restaurant and hotel, tourism;
3. Transportation, storage, communication, financial mediation;
4. Defense and mandatory social services;
5. Education, science, health care, public works, etc.

At the same time, the service system has its own complexities. Accordingly, the following specific aspects of infrastructure systems can be distinguished:

- the complexity of determining the real value and price of the services provided. This is especially evident in transportation, warehousing, fulfillment, loading and unloading, packaging and other production support systems. The labor value indicated in them is formed in the final value or price of the manufactured product.

- the complexity of the process of ownership of the provided service. It is known that any commodity that can be exchanged for money can also exchange its ownership. Or in other words, in the process of selling the goods, its owner also changes. However, it is very difficult to observe and separate this process in service activities. Because the provided service is not formed as a material economic object. Moreover, as mentioned above, in most cases, the labor used is directly consumed in this process itself. Therefore, the property ownership of the provided service is transferred from one subject to another under the ownership of the product formed as a result of the main production.

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- failure to support standardization processes in service provision. Due to the intangible nature of the service, standardization of this activity, metrological processes cannot be used. Of course, labor can be rationed. However, this is mainly done for the purpose of labor and payment for it, and implies labor productivity.

In the service system, state education standards are used in the field of education. This standardization envisages the level of knowledge and skills of trained personnel, not directly the process of education and training.

- constant variability of quality. It is known that in many cases there is a tendency to individuality in the nature of service activities. This, on the one hand, leads to the constant variability of the service quality, and on the other hand, it does not allow the use of industrial automation processes in the service. It can be traced from simple household service to transportation.

- the impossibility of maintaining the provided services. This aspect is clear in the true sense, that is, the service rendered can be considered only when it is rendered. In addition, the second aspect of the issue, that is, the availability of stock (of course, to a limited extent) is of great importance for an enterprise operating in the consumer market.

Small business entities benefit greatly from the development of infrastructure units, as such units free them from work related to production services and allow them to focus on their core activities.

The conditions created by the infrastructure, in turn, can be categorized as follows:

- Direct production process service provider - supply of material equipment and sale of finished products, collection and processing of information, accounting service. Consulting service on technological, management issues, etc.;
- Conditions for the reproduction of the labor force - supporting the health, education and professional training, recreation of workers and employees.

Until now, infrastructure has been considered as a combination of production and social infrastructures. With the introduction of the economic system based on the market economy, the scale of the production infrastructure has expanded, and the words "market infrastructure" and "institutional infrastructure" have entered into use.

Market infrastructure includes networks directly serving the production process. It includes cargo transportation, electricity, gas and water supply, warehouse management, communication, information, material and technical support, product transportation, storage and processing, technical service, marketing and advertising, information and consulting, auditing, finance and credit and includes services such as investment. (Chart 1).

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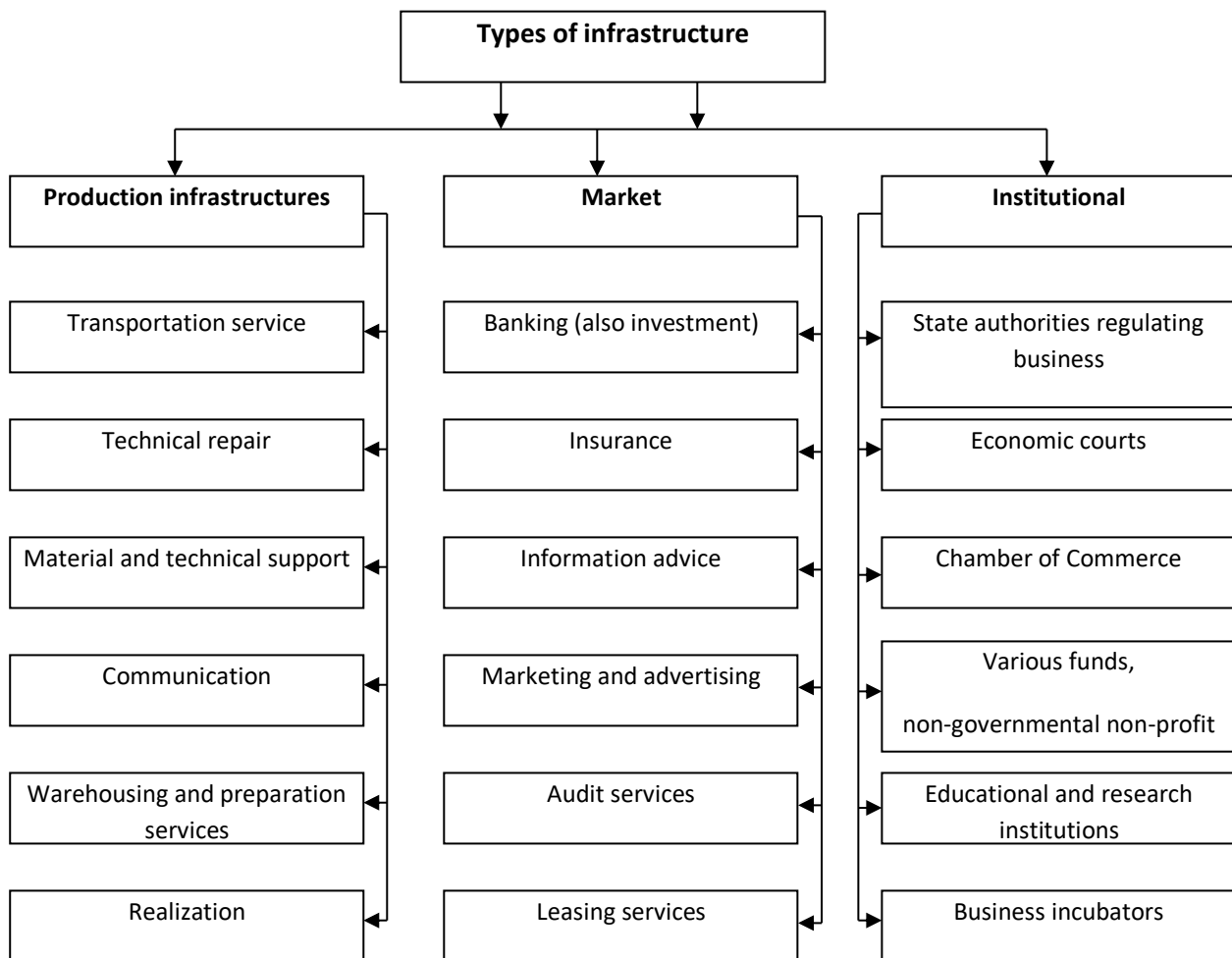


Figure 1. System of infrastructures serving business entities

Social infrastructure serves to create normal work activities for workers and employees in the production process and to reproduce the labor force, as well as to satisfy the demand of entrepreneurs for various types of household services.

Institutional infrastructure includes types of activities that support and regulate optimal macroeconomic ratios of economic development. It includes state and non-state management bodies that regulate the economy, etc.

In short, it is important to form market infrastructures that regulate and support small and private business entities. This is also confirmed by the experience of highly developed countries. In general, infrastructures are considered a necessary system in the development of society and serve to coordinate human activities in every way.

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