Practices of Solidarity and Self-organization in Local Communities

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ABSTRACT

Article is devoted to analysis of practices of mutual aid and self-organization, opportunities of their institutional embodiment in social space of local communities. Based on analysis of questionnaire surveys of the population of Belgorod region there were identified the leading motives of cooperation and mutual assistance, which include material deprivation, lack of information resources, the need for confederates, violation of civil rights. The most widely used forms of collective action, based on self-organization are landscaping, collective mutual aid, collective petitions to the authorities. Conducted research enables to draw conclusion of development both vertical and horizontal forms of collaboration and co-operation, at preservation of more significant role of vertical structures.

Keywords: Local Community, Self-organization, Cooperation, Mutual Assistance Practice, Collective Action
JEL Classifications: D64, D71, R23

1. INTRODUCTION

Modern Russian society is characterized by a relatively high level of social atomization, lack of social trust and solidarity. These symptoms manifest themselves at different levels of social interaction-from attitude towards the authorities to the relationship between family and friends. Even in neighboring communities, people are often not able to manifest the qualities of partnership, trust, mutual responsibility, self-organization. Yet increasingly it appears on mezzo-social and macro-social levels. Local communities, uniting the population of certain territories, as a rule, within the municipalities often do not have a set of mechanisms (with the exception of administrative power), integrating and consolidating the population.

However, within the "strong" ties, in direct contacts of citizens aimed to address private and local problems and forming emotional intimacy, which we call micro-practices of solidarity, there are quite a few examples of self-organization, mutual trust and mutual responsibility.

The purpose of this article is an empirical analysis of the practice of mutual aid and self-organization as well as the features of their institutional embodiment. The study reflects on the mechanisms of solidarity in the social space of local communities. This will significantly strengthen the local identity of local communities, form a stable system of vertical and horizontal linkages, create opportunities for the operation of the feedback and public control over the activities of administrative authorities.

Research on micro-practices of solidarity in the social space of local communities reveals the key mechanisms of social integration and the formation of local identity, which are not based on external (administrative and political) but internal factors (i.e., values and interests of the participants). Accordingly, the identification of mechanisms that underlie the solidarity of micro-practices, enables us to justify and clarify the universal mechanisms of social self-organization, integration and solidarity, to contribute to the sociology of everyday life, sociology of practices, sociology of governance. The applied value of the research results is to regulate

the institutional and socio-cultural conditions of integration of micro-practices of solidarity at the meso-level of social relations.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The issues of collective action and group solidarity in foreign and domestic sociology received a considerable amount of research. The concept of networking in particular, founded by such scholars as Moss, Homans and Blau, continues to remain relevant in the theoretical and applied terms. Contemporary research, including the publications of Barsukova (2003), Gradoselskaya (2001), Granovetter (1973), Castells (2000), Novinskaya (1998), Prigogine (2008) focused on developing the various aspects of social networking-from methodological to the specific empirical analysis of formation and functioning of the networked relations in various local groups. Barsukova (2004) explores a special type of social integration-reciprocity, which implies the movement of wealth between households in the form of gifts, becoming a major redistributive mechanism of the community. Granovetter (1973) has shown that for many social problems, such as job search, for example, weak bonds are much more effective than strong. This effect he called "the power of weak ties."

Significant methodological significance for the study of social networks has the concept of social capital, elaborated by Coleman (2001), Putnam (1993), Radayev (1993), Sidorina (2007), Fukuyama (2002). From the perspective of John Coleman and Robert D. Putnam, social capital facilitates certain actions of actors within the social structure, contributes to the achievement of certain goals to achieve in the absence of which is not possible; it contributes to the growth of human capital, as well as changes in social and political institutions.

The concept of social practices developed by Bourdieu (1995) has a significant importance for the understanding of the phenomenon of social practices, including micro-practices of solidarity and their role in the integration of the local community. Thus, Bourdieu sees the practice as a system of individual and collective actions, objectively aimed at a specific result, but not always having a reflexive nature. Practices are formed under the influence of living conditions and mental (i.e., cultural) dispositions (i.e., habitus). Accordingly, examining practices and, especially, trying to change them, one must take into account their non-random and multifactorial nature.

The theoretical foundation of social self-organization has been developed within the framework of the sociology of social movements (Smelser, 1962; Sztompka, 2001).

Specificity of self-organization of the population in the Russian regions, including in the form of territorial self-governance, is analyzed in the research Batanina and Lavrikova (2014), Rogacheva (2010), Sidorina (2010), Fomin (2012) to name just a few.

In recent years, Russian sociological centers has collected the data that can also be used to understand the phenomenon of civil activism. The Levada Center in the course of the study "Prospects of civil society in Russia" in 2010-2011 held interviews with activists of non-governmental organizations. A number of interesting empirical data relating to the adoption of responsibilities by the people for their own life trajectories, for the events taking place around them, were received by the Fund "Public opinion" in 2010-2011 in the course of monitoring the "Civil Climate."

The large number of theoretical and empirical research contributes to the conceptual definition of a number of social phenomena associated with collective practices, social solidarity, self-organization, social movements. However, a serious research problem remains the understanding of the mechanisms of the population self-organization and formation of solidarity micro-practices under the conditions of sufficiently atomized Russian society with the dominance of the institutions of power in the public sphere and paternalistic attitudes among majority of the population.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Participants
The empirical basis of the study were the results of a questionnaire survey of the population of the Belgorod region (n = 1002), conducted by the authors in September-November 2015. The objective was to identify behavioral patterns and frames of mass consciousness, associated with micro-practices of solidarity, mutual assistance and trust.

3.2. Instrument
The achievement of the task is expected by the use of complex methods that enable, on the one hand, to diagnose the behavioral patterns of the population and the frames of the mass consciousness, and, on the other, to carry out simulation of social technologies of broadcasting micro-practices in the social space of local communities.

To collect the primary sociological information the questionnaire method was used. Processing results of the study was carried out using the software "DA-System" (Determination analysis of the data, version 5.0). The main mode of the data analysis was the acquisition and visual analysis of the distributions table. This mode is necessary for an overall assessment of the situation and the formulation of a more complex analysis tasks. At this stage, the "designer allocation table" is used. Auxiliary mode programs that are used in data processing and analysis were "one-dimensional output tables" and "output of two-dimensional tables." When analyzing the data the methods of structural and comparative analysis, grouping and typology of social variables were used.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Social and interpersonal trust is an important indicator of social solidarity. Trust is a necessary condition for the stability of attitude of people, without which it deforms and becomes susceptible to degradation and stress. Confidence can also exclude costly

mechanisms of mutual control from the personal and social contacts and focus on the content of communication.

The findings of the study allow to state a relatively low level of generalized interpersonal trust. Responding to a question, "Do you think that most people can or cannot be trusted?" A little more than a third of respondents (35.33%) gave a positive answer. The opposite view was expressed by almost half of the respondents (49.30%).

The level of generalized interpersonal trust, according to our measurements, over the last 5 years has not changed-in 2010 the proportion of respondents who believed that most people can be trusted, was 33.1%. Some improvement in confidence occurred in 2012 (Table 1). Apparently, this was due to a general increase in the level of social optimism in the Russian society, caused by a relatively painless way out of financial and economic crisis, as well as, possibly, a positive effect from the start of implementation of the strategy on "Shaping the regional society of solidarity" in 2011.

Analysis of the influence of socio-demographic characteristics of respondents to the level of generalized interpersonal trust showed that the highest percentage of respondents who believe that most people cannot be trusted, is among young people, including students, as well as persons living in a city or urban settlement. The higher the age of the respondents, the higher is the proportion of respondents who believe that the people "can be trusted" - from 25.2% (young people 18-29 years old) to 41.1% (respondents aged 60 years and older). The share of trust of the respondents living in rural areas, on average 4-5% higher than in the city.

The level of interpersonal trust is reduced by the expansion of the circle of its potential recipients. Thus, the majority of residents of the house, the yard, the street (in rural areas) in one degree or another trusted by 56.1% of the respondents (18.9% of them gave a clear positive response); do not trust - 36.7%. But with the expansion of the circle of trust to destinations outside the urban or rural settlement the level of the share of respondents who trust the majority of the inhabitants of the territory is reduced to 34.0%; in fact to the same level, which is characterized by a generalized interpersonal trust, in principle. This pattern has been seen in previous studies (Reutov et al., 2013). Local, communitarian level is the limit at which a change of scale of social relations is already unimportant for interpersonal trust.

The level of confidence in the local governance is much lower than the level of confidence in the majority of the inhabitants of the settlement. Thus, in one degree or another trusted leadership of the city (region, rural settlement) 25.9% of the respondents

Table 1: Do you think that most people can or cannot be trusted?

Survey question	2010* (%)	2012** (%)	2015 (%)
They can be trusted	33.1	42.4	35.3
They cannot be trusted	51.5	37.5	48.3
Hard to say/no answer	15.4	20.1	16.4

Source: *Reutov et al. (2011), **Reutov et al. (2015)

(of which only 6.6% gave a clear positive response). Do not trust - 62.8% (and, 30.2% answered unequivocally negative).

Deficiency of solidarity in particular is beyond the "strong" relations-relations between relatives and friends. Just over half of the respondents (57.7%) said that their immediate environment is more consensus than disunity. The opposite view was expressed by 23.0%. What is even more important to understand the nature of Russian society, is that cooperation between people is difficult not only because of the lack of appropriate institutional arrangements, but also as a result of the unwillingness of citizens to foresee the situation and the cases in which cooperation could be useful. Only 23.7% of respondents said that situations requiring cooperation between people, their cooperation efforts and resources in daily life appear almost constantly. Slightly more than half of the respondents (52.5%) believe that such situations occur quite often. On rarity of such situations indicated 17.6% of respondents, and another 6.3% - in their absence. Thus, only for less than a quarter of the population cooperation and collaboration are the "natural" characteristic of social relations inherent in Russian society. But, on the other hand, there is relatively little supporters of the "atomic" model of Russian everyday life-almost the same.

Personal experience of involvement in a situation actualizing cooperation and collaboration between people, gives a generalized estimates of respondents relevant characteristics of society. Thus, only 10.5% of respondents said that such situations arise in their lives almost constantly, and 47.8% - quite often. The fact that they practically do not occur stated 12.5%, another 29.2% of respondents said that there are rare. That is, in this case more than 40% of the population have no real incentives for cooperation and collaboration, or they are of sporadic nature. Lead stimulus of involvement in the micro-practices of solidarity aimed at solving specific problems is financial trouble-stated by 47.8% of respondents (among those who noted the catalytic role of the problems of personal and family level). In second place is the lack of information resources-the need for advice and consultation on various issues-this was indicated by 22.9% of respondents. "Valuable" motivation is typical for 18.9% of the respondents who are in need of adherents in a particular case, enthusiasm. For 14.1% of the situation, encouragement of cooperation for the solution of specific problems relates to the violation of the rights of either themselves or someone from the family members. Almost the same - 13.9% need help around the house, farm. Finally, 8.0% of the respondents in this group do not have enough of personal resources for the care and supervision of children or the elderly.

Development of micro-practices of solidarity prevents the installation of the overwhelming majority of respondents to the priority of the "strong" bonds as a source of additional resources. First of all, it is family members and relatives. Their help a difficult life situation is expected by 68.4% of respondents. Particularly significant this resource is for young people (80.9%) and women (71.6%). Friends and acquaintances are turned to by 43.3% of the respondents, and among the youth the percentage is 62.4% - greater than that of other age groups. All other social networks are not actually considered as social capital by the overwhelming majority of the respondents. So, the help of colleagues at work would

be requested by 8.2%, to the help of neighbors - 6.69% of the respondents, while among older respondents the proportion of those who are counting on the help of neighbors is twice as much (12.8%). It is significant that with all the paternalism of Russian citizens to the aid of state (municipal) bodies, institutions counts a tiny fraction of respondents - 4.7%. Even less of - 2.9% is hoping for help from public organizations. But most importantly, in the minds of most of the population is spread the belief in impossibility of obtaining assistance from anyone around, and in rural areas-higher than in the total sample - 67.4%. The only source of resources to solve "personal problems is yourself only" - this was indicated by 62.7% of respondents. Of course, a large part of them at the same time expect to receive help of their loved ones. But the fact of the choice of this position is quite eloquent and clearly indicates a disconnection of Russian society.

Micro-practice of solidarity in the community, in addition to mutual aid, is implemented in various forms of collective action, based on the self-organization of citizens. Self-organization is a process of establishing direct links and contacts between citizens to solve local problems and functional tasks with a view to updating them after reaching the primary goals. Grounds for self-organization can be quite different and varied-from the protection of one's rights to leisure. The basic principle is that the process of self-organization those weakly acquainted or strangers to each other are included in the joint activities or organize them. In the process of self-actualization the "weak" ties occur, happens their transformation into a "strong" ones or new connections of different nature are formed.

During the last year, half of the respondents (49.4%) in one way or another have participated in a community activity with neighbors (in the village or the street). Most often, it was associated with cleaning and landscaping (27.5% of respondents). Many (17.1%) took part in various forms of collective mutual aid (including the collection of money, things), the collection of signatures, the collective appeal to the authorities and other official institutions (12.7%). 8.2% of the respondents were involved in the arrangement and conduct of festivals. A small percentage of respondents (1.9%) took part in the protest actions (meetings, pickets). Marked forms of collective action can indeed be described as a self-organization of citizens, as most of initiative to participate in them (at least in the opinion of respondents) came bottom-up. The initiators were mostly neighbors of respondents (45.5% said it was them), but they themselves interrogated in 25.2% of such initiatives. Public organizations as initiators were stated by 17.2% of the respondents. On the role of other external bodies-government, management companies, in the organization of collective action were stated by 10.6% and 8.8% of the respondents, respectively.

More than half (57.2%) of respondents have ever, in the past year, participated in collective activities beyond the purely professional, together with colleagues at work. The most common forms of collective actions were mutual organization (including collection of money, things; cited by 23.1% of respondents), cleaning, landscaping (22.7%) and the unit of corporate holidays (22.0%). The collection of signatures and collective appeals to the leadership is rare (5.4%).

As a rule, the initiative for the organization of collective actions in the workplace were centralized: 40.3% of respondents who took part in them, said that they came from the management of the organization, 9.3% - from trade union committee of the organization, and 7.4% - by authorities. However, the mobilization "bottom-up" was also quite common: 34.4% of respondents said their colleagues prompted them to participate in a collective action, and 19.9% of the respondents themselves were their initiators. Thus, one cannot state that the collective actions of representatives of labor collectives are always mobilized in nature and are initiated "top-down." Many of them have autonomous nature and in this case, it is a practice solidarity in pure form. Collective action, organized at the meso-local level-together with "other residents of the city, town, village," turned out to be less common than the forms of collective participation at the level of neighborhood community or the workplace. Nevertheless, the experience of participating in such an activity was experienced by 36.8% of the respondents in the past year. Most often, they were the cleaning and landscaping (noted by 16.8% of respondents) and collective mutual aid (including the collection of money, things; 11.3%). Somewhat less were marked the organization of holidays (9.7%) and the collection of signatures, the collective appeal to the authorities and other official institutions (7.1%). Participation in the actions of protest nature is rather limited (1.2%).

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Thus, despite the relatively low level of generalized interpersonal trust, mutual support and various forms of self-organization are gradually becoming an integral part of the social space of local communities. The resulting data enabled to diagnose the relatively low level of generalized interpersonal trust. The majority of the young people as well as residents of cities and town are less inclined to trust people around them. The more distanced are the potential recipients of trust from the person, the lower is the level of trust, particularly in relation to authorities. At the same time, the micro-practices of solidarity, which, in particular, the mutual aid and various forms of self-organization, is gradually becoming an integral part of the social space of local communities. However, this mutual assistance practices are implemented mainly within the "strong" ties-family and friendship. Quite common is the installation towards the impossibility of obtaining assistance "from outside," the need to solve one's problems "on their own." Organizing collective action to solve local problems and functional tasks performed as "top" and "bottom." Vertical structures continue to play a significant role in the self-organizational processes of local communities and workplace. At the same time more and more common, especially at the level of local communities, becomes the "bottom-up" mobilization, on the initiative of the housemates, friends, work colleagues.

6. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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