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## CIVIL SOCIETY: PROBLEMS AND PARADOXES

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### *Abstract*

The results of civil society sociological studies in the region and the non-profit organizations activities are presented in the article. Surveys were conducted in target groups: population, non-profit organizations representatives and local governments. It has been established that the non-profit sector, which acts as the civil society institutional basis, gradually occupies its important place in the economy structure and in social services system. At the same time, according to experts, the level of the Third sector development in Russia compared to other countries is much lower. At the same time, the assessments positive modality identifies the increasing non-profit organizations influence on the population and government consolidation. This is a favorable prerequisite for social stability establishment and the social conflicts elimination. At the same time, the social system is considered as chaotic in the sense that it acts as both a force aimed at preserving and maintaining the system integrity, and the forces leading to the central ties weakening and the disorder instrumentalization. Therefore, it justifies the new agenda facing the elite, the government and the active social part. The main conclusion is that it requires systematic work, taking into account the complexity of modern society and global challenges. Its general outline is presented in the article in the form of paradoxes. To eliminate the interests' gap, an ongoing dialogue is needed, based on solvable local problems, the active formation of communications between all public life subjects based on both traditional and new forms of civil society organization and development.

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## 1. Introduction

In the new reality the state administration system have to be turned towards the management of goals and projects, both economic and social, in the cooperation context. At the same time, the social system is considered as chaotic in the sense that it acts as both a force aimed at preserving and maintaining the system integrity, and the forces leading to the central ties weakening and the disorder instrumentalization. Civil society (with new communications technologies) contributes to the development of these trends. The question is: what is the trend and to what extent?

## 2. Problem Statement

The government intends to simplify and standardize the social order, driving it into the format of such categories and institutions that make this order accessible and easy to control and manage. In this case, sociology uses the term "environmental misconception" (Maitland & Bauer, 2001; Brewer & Venaik, 2014), which means the objects group aggregated data incorrect use by transferring them to individual objects, or make them match the norms. Environmental misconceptions are the result of a logical error in the a priori or statistical data interpretation, where information about the phenomena (or subjects) nature is derived from a generalization of these phenomena (subjects) class to which they belong. It also includes the imposition of norms and other aspects that violate the social ecology. The challenge is to avoid these misconceptions and form the right agenda.

## 3. Research Questions

The social structure is extremely difficult. This accepted truth, by its obviousness virtue, does not seem to require proof and, as it were, can be used exclusively rhetorically. At the same time, today the whole world (including the Russian Federation and its subjects) has faced challenges that impose new requirements on the formation of a social order, a society structure capable of modernizing the country. Therefore, the subject of the study was a complex of civil society important aspects, as well as a new agenda facing the elite, the government and an society's active part, which involves systematically considering social structure issues, taking into account the modern society and global challenges complexities.

## 4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to obtain information necessary for analyzing the civil society development problems, including analyzing the activities of the Third sector – non-profit organizations (NPOs), assessing the implementing socially oriented projects effectiveness and the level of public satisfaction with the services provided. The Republic of Karelia region was chosen as the object of the study. Using this example, an attempt was made at an empirical level to measure the effectiveness of the Third sector and civil society in general.

## 5.  Research Methods

The survey was conducted in 2015 in 12 municipalities in the target groups: population, NGOs representatives, and local government representatives. A quota sample, reproducing the population structure, was compiled in order to conduct a survey for each urban district and municipal district. The census data were used (GKS, 2010).

## 6.  Findings

It has been established that the non-profit sector, which acts as the civil society institutional basis, is gradually growing and occupies an important place in the economy and employment structure, in the social services system. At the same time, according to experts, the Third sector development level in Russia compared with developed countries is much lower. According to the Report on the Development of Civil Society Institutions in Russia (Nasriddinov, 2014), the NPO sector share in Russian GDP is 0.9%, while the same indicator for countries with a developed Third sector reached the point of 6.5%. The share of people employed in the third sector in Russia is 1.1%, abroad – is 7.1%, the share of SO NPOs from the total number of NPOs is 13.5% in our country, 60–70% – abroad. A comparison of the NPOs formal indicators in Russia and in the Republic of Karelia is presented in Table 1.

**Table 01.**  Comparison of NPOs in the Russian Federation and the Republic of Karelia (2013)

| NPOs indicators | Russian Federation | Республика Карелия |
|---|---|---|
| NPOs employees average number, thousand | 625 | 3.2 |
| Total number of registered organizations (NPOs), thousand. | 226 | 1.3 |
| Beneficiaries' incomes (NPO), billion rubles. | 193 | 1.0 |

According to established data, 70% of Third sector organizations have a small number of fulltime employees – up to 5 people. In the Republic, 40% of organizations have 1-3 people in their staff. The labor scarcity is partly compensated by volunteers. In Karelia, the number of volunteers involved in the NPOs statutory activities implementation in the aggregate, reaches 18 thousand people. According to the Third sector representatives interviewed, the main problems in the NPOs activities are the third sector potential underestimation, bureaucracy in power structures, pressure from regulatory authorities, the authorities' insensitivity to public inquiries, disunity of NPOs. According to the population, the main problems in NPO activities are insufficient funding (33% of responses), lack of experience in project implementation (18%), insufficient interaction with local government representatives (12%), lack of qualified personnel (8%) and the necessary equipment (8%). According to NPOs, the problems are the following: lack of financial resources (20% of responses), lack of sponsors support (12%), problems with placement (12%), lack of knowledge (10%), especially legal knowledge (7%), lack of enthusiasm (7%), etc. At the same time, generally positive attitudes have been formed among the population, which can become catalysts for the civil society development. High degree of uncertainty and inconsistency in assessing the civil society state and prospects was revealed. At the same time, certain tendencies were identified, which stipulate the following scenarios: *conflict* (state and civil society opposition, pressure from the state, increased protest background, problems exacerbation); *non-conflict* (state and society partnership, cooperation in solving

social problems). If the state does not find and does not apply partnership mechanisms, then with an increase in the citizens' social activity, the likely scenarios become *conflicting*. Many individuals' association leads to the cooperation effect – a mass social force acting as an integral organism and subject. NPO leaders unite social groups. Therefore, NPOs, supporting by the state, should consolidate their resources in the joint projects framework in order to design the required effect of this social force aimed at the positive society's development.

## 7. Conclusion

The main conclusion is that the civil society formation requires systematic work, outlined below. Conclusions are formulated in the form of paradoxes in order to emphasize a problem situation that requires an immediate solution. The first problem is *methodological*, formulated in the form of the following paradox: *a change in the public consciousness modality with the traditional economic imperatives priority*. Identity gradually occupies the leading position in the public consciousness, which is not the case for Soviet society model and the liberal model due to the determinism of socio-cultural and ethno-political processes by economic and political reasons. Also undoubtedly, the third sector needs new institutionalization. The crisis of the civil society traditional form is manifested in institutional problems in procedural and judicial difficulties. *Certain social spheres have conflict zones, but do not have effective institutional solutions (the second paradox).* Conflicts arise unexpectedly, so they need to be predicted. In particular, there is always a chance for ethnic conflicts. However, in the chosened region, which is a multinational, a sub ethnos with a stable tolerance towards other ethno cultural groups has been formed. At the same time, there are certain problems (this is reflected in table 2). Current state of the regional ethno cultural and migration situation is overviewed in this work (Tolstoguzov & Pitukhina, 2017, 2018).

**Table 02.** Distribution of the judgments choice by respondents in relation to interethnic (interconfessional) relations, percent, 2016

| Judgments about | Positive response | Negative response | Found difficulty in replying |
|---|---|---|---|
| Inter-ethnic relations | 67.8 | 20.2 | 11.9 |
| Interconfessional relations | 68.4 | 11.5 | 20.0 |

A positive response (in Table 2) was obtained by summing up the respondents' opinions "relations are good, there is a willingness to cooperate between representatives of various nationalities, ethnic and cultural groups (denominations, religions)" and "relations are calm, there is no hostility or irritation to representatives of other nationalities, representatives of ethnic and cultural groups (denominations, religions)". A negative response came out by summing up the respondents' opinions "Relations are outwardly calm, but there is internal tension between representatives of different nationalities, ethnic and cultural groups (denominations, religions)" and "tensions, there may be conflicts between representatives of different nationalities, ethnic and cultural groups (denominations, religions)". At the same time, the vulnerability of civil society structure and the new social order formation, in our opinion, is insufficient communication between social groups, hierarchical elite levels, and also between state, legal, and public

institutions. Civil society is a horizontal communication society. The lack of sufficient communications and vertical connections weakens the potential for trust in society. At the same time, the positive modality of assessments (table 3) speaks about the NPOs influence in shaping the synthesis of population and power (a prerequisite for the social stability and social conflicts elimination).

**Table 03.** Answer to the question "Has your organization accomplish the goals: public involvement in the direct implementation of the authorities' decisions ?" (2015), percentages

| Yes, in general | More likely than no | More likely no than yes | Totally failed | This goal was not pursued | Found difficulty in replying |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 17 | 23 | 8 | 5 | 21 | 26 |

Political systems and their legitimation are strongly dependent on citizens' support and legitimation (Iston, 2000) and their satisfaction with legal norms, authorities, the political system's "inputs" and "outputs" structure. In other words, the shared beliefs of those who govern and manage the processes and results of management are crucial to the stability and political systems preservation (Sabatier, 1991; Holbig, 2013). Public participation (or non-participation) is one of the main elements that has been studied in detail and, accordingly, in the social sciences, a question has long been raised about the correct determining factors for analyzing public participation and the democratic institutions effectiveness (Deth, 2011; Etzioni, 1969; Verba & Nie, 1972) for the social order design . On the other hand, the community demonstrates the ability to resist categories imposed top-down. *For each authority's thesis there is noisy and disordered real world's antithesis (the third paradox).* Any formal institutional innovation may have an informal shadow, and it can be very significant. These are the consequences of designing a social order. The study showed that the proportion of the population involved in the NPOs activities is small. The most mass event – Sabbatarians. There is also a clear involvement in political activities during election campaigns. But social activities itself, except helping veterans and solving environmental problems, did not fall into popular activities. If analyze the citizen's appeals to public organizations over the past 5 years, then the most popular were trade unions, charities and youth organizations, as well as local governments. Among the respondents, who thought that they have got the services, three out of four were satisfied with the NPO services quality (ie, 80% versus 20% unmet) – or 37% of all respondents (including those who found it difficult to answer - 22 %). According to the survey, 31% of respondents did not face or did not use the services. Thus, there is at the same time *the activity of the population and the crisis of the traditional civil society organization, the discrepancy between social rootedness and the NPOs introduced forms. This is the fourth paradox.* Indeed, according to the report of the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation, the existing organizational and legal forms of NPOs do not allow fully realizing the civic activism potential in the non-profit sector (Nasriddinov, 2014). It is necessary to strengthen the state support level for this sphere, which in Russia is still far behind developed countries (Kuzminov, 2013). At the same time, we observe a kind of palliative (or half measures): the authorities design aspirations are expressed by the introduced standards and institutions in the context of their desire for simplification, but not of the social practice objective reality. Therefore, they become an ineffective management tool and generate mistakes that lead to the rejection by society of these institutions and to opportunism on the part of the population to these management actions. This is largely due to the fact that a *modernization agenda has been formed in the absence of a socio-*

*political platform and a social base for modernization (the fifth paradox)*. In connection with the "Soviet man" concept rejection, its internationalism was painfully transformed through the national identification processes into some other quality. Moreover, the collapse of traditional background knowledge and the increase in life concepts in modern societies made societies to be even more fragmented. As a result, the background knowledge and lifestyle heterogeneity has a strong influence on society, assessing the social systems quality (Beetham, Carvalho, Landman, & Weir, 2008). People become more or less interested (or not interested) in public life, depending on what interests and values are significant in the corresponding vital world conditions. Thus, it matters what ideas about the world's life are fixed in people. Considering civil society as a factor contributing to the modern state effective functioning, it is necessary to answer the question: either the order does not correspond to real life and the institutions need to be reformed, or has society reduced interest in NPOs as a form of initiative? Or is it still a crisis of form? Against the background of the crisis of civil society traditional forms (and the third sector itself), there is a steady trend in the development of society – the development of Internet communications, social networks and communities. Thus, civil society organization new forms, unless they do not oppose traditional ones, then constitute a serious competition to them. A person who begins to perceive the world through the Internet, there is a new picture of the world. Internet, with the growth of its audience, becomes a means of not just mass, but global communication, stepping over national borders and uniting world information resources into a single system. The society is transformed under the pressure of communication or culture, and the culture and language themselves change under the public consciousness pressure (Abraham, Mitina, & Houston, 2015). Modern society with a traditional organization challenged the so-called "Network society". To trigger off a conflict in society, today there is no need for an organization, it is enough to throw into a social network a kind of provocation carrying the effect of the "black swan". It is about the dependence of the formation of the structure and society quality on global communications under significant problems presence, in particular because of a decrease in the critical thinking level. The Internet should be considered as an important historical transformation of society, requiring appropriate education and upbringing. *The Internet either "breaks" (personal and public conflict) civil society or becomes the center and platform for interactions between knowledge (experts) and power, civil society and power (sixth paradox).*This is how communications change, and this, in turn, generates global transformations in society that cannot be ignored. With the advent of the global network, on the one hand, information has become more accessible, on the other – the amount of noise has increased dramatically. At the same time, the need for reliable verification of the information received has increased. At the same time, the objectivity of information implies the existence of the necessary culture of thinking. When cultural traditions break down, the *problem of trust comes in the form of verifying information*. Thus, a new agenda has been formed, facing the elite and the government, the people and the society's active part. In connection with the change of society and public consciousness, two streams are becoming more and more apparent in this consciousness, which we conditionally call "confrontational" and "partner". Therefore, in any case, public policy should, using the right incentives, provide support for constructive aspirations for partnership interaction in order to solve social and economic problems and contain confrontational actions and attitudes in society. The many individuals' association leads to the cooperation effect – a mass social force acting as an integral organism. It is necessary to activate local communities and unite social groups in order to focus and unite efforts on

the social communications formation and development and on the joint solution of social problems. The population must fully realize their creative potential, their national-cultural identity and civic position. An ongoing dialogue is required to eliminate the interests' gap. It is based on solvable local problems. They allow concentrating efforts, opportunities and uncertainties in the proportions that can be intelligently managed. In this case, they become the focal points for decision-making and the agreements subject. The present time complexity lies in the fact that it is necessary to achieve the general social cultural integration in the context of global geopolitical changes, the emergence of a new economy, and the active development of network forms. Thus, the state policy (in the considered context of the Third sector development) should be focused on the following points: achieving the strategic goals of the regions and the country in the national security and the forming state ideology context; increasing confidence in the information source, its analyzer and expert; the formation of communications between all public life subjects, based on both traditional and new forms of organization and civil society development; public expertise acts of regulatory impact use, which is one of the newest tools to optimize public administration, already involved at the federal level of power of Russia, but not yet fully represented in the regions; creating a legal framework for the activities of public organizations within the transit period (changing the models of Russian social structure: from Soviet through liberal to ...?); active use of the global relations system in order to influence the organization of the public consciousness elements and structure; the integrative approach development and the wide use of "soft power" that form a social order adequate to the new challenges

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