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**INMATE SUBCULTURE EXPANSION IN RUSSIA FROM THE  
POINT OF SYSTEM ANALYSIS**

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***Abstract***

The inmate subculture in Russia has a lot of common characteristics with such kind of subcultures in other countries all over the world. It is widely discussed whether inmate subculture is much more dangerous for the society than the criminal or gang subcultures and whether it can influence the traditional culture up to the point of the traditional value system destruction. There is a consensus between the researchers that the possible damage caused by the inmate culture depends on its penetration rate in traditional culture, which is unique for every society. It can be supposed that the high level of potential cultural damage differs Russian inmate subculture from the others. Inmate subculture is of great interest for all modern science. Despite the large number of the studies dedicated to the inmate subculture, it can be hardly named at least one, which is based on the system analysis and uses its methods. In presented research, the authors attempted to discuss the possibility of applying the set-theoretic analysis for inmate subculture taking into consideration the open systems synthetic characteristics. The article analyses the emergence, inseparability, inherency and expediency of the inmate subculture. The possibilities of applying this method as countermeasures against the inmate subculture spread are shown.

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**Keywords:** Social systems, inmate subculture, penitentiary institutions, system analysis.



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## 1. Introduction

Inmate subculture as a phenomenon is well known all over the world. However, in post-Soviet society it has obtained a great spread in all spheres of the cultural and social life (Akimzhanov et al., 2016). Undoubtedly, it has influenced traditional social institutions and traditional values (Berlusconi et al., 2016). In particular, the inmate subculture had a degrading effect on the language. Judging by the linguistic signs shown in Russian language during past 30 years it can be set an opinion, that inmate subculture has made her way into almost all cultural patterns. Researchers have not come to a consensus on the exact definition of inmate subculture that should sound terminologically correct (Western, 2002). However, at the same time, they are unanimously convinced that its expansion erodes humanistic values (Useem & Clayton, 2013). Because of that inmate subculture as a phenomenon is of the greatest interest for criminology, sociology, cultural science, social philosophy and psychology (LaFree et al., 2019).

All existing definitions of inmate culture allowing to separate this sociocultural phenomenon from the traditional culture contain the description of following specific elements: language (prison slang, fenyá), knowledges (credo), values (antivalues), ideology (for example, AUE) (Donskih, 2015). At the same time, all the researchers determine the stratum (groups of subculture carriers) in different ways. Many believe that main inmate subculture carriers are mostly convicts (Sarybekova et al., 2017). Others include in the circle of carriers those persons who actively interact with prisoners (family members, friends, prison staff) (Veresha, 2017). There is a particular opinion that all members of the society can become carriers in case of vast expansion of the destructive subculture patens.

## 2. Problem Statement

The inmate subculture in Russia has a lot of common characteristics with such kind of subcultures in other countries of the world (Mamitova et al., 2016). It is widely discussed whether inmate subculture is much more dangerous for the society than the criminal or gang subculture and whether it can influence the traditional culture up to the point of the traditional value system destruction. There is a consensus between the researchers that the possible damage caused by the inmate culture depends on its penetration rate in traditional culture, and that particular rate is unique for every society (Monakhova et al., 2017). As it is said above, in Russia the level of potential cultural damage caused by the influence and expansion of the inmate subculture is very high and it becomes more threatening constantly. The inmate subculture has penetrated almost all spheres of modern Russian society. The borders of traditional values are blurred because of the expansion of prison aggressive values. In sociocultural realities, the inmate subculture expansion carries the danger of degradation of all traditional humanistic culture institutions. Thus, the inmate subculture can be called one of the most significant factors threatening the traditional humanistic values, well-being of the society and its moral health.

## 3. Research Questions

Inmate subculture is of great interest for modern science. Unfortunately, it should be noted that modern studies on the inmate subculture lack the systematic approach. Despite the large number of the scientific researches dedicated to the phenomenon, it can be hardly named at least one, which is based on

the system analysis and uses its methods. However, in the modern world only the use of a systematic approach gives a possibility to analyse all the aspects of the phenomenon, describe its structure and distribution mechanisms. Based on system analysis it is possible to develop detailed and effective ways and methods to counteract the inmate subculture expansion (Ponomarev, 2017).

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

Studies aimed to develop the inmate subculture destruction methods have the particular relevance. The well-being of the society gives the greatest importance for the research (Dyuzheva et al., 2019; Vostroknutov et al., 2019). One of the named above research is based on systematic approach and system analysis (Bertalanffy et al., 1951; Boulding, 1956). It can be supposed that system analysis meets the research requirements and should be applied while conducting the inmate subculture phenomenon studies. It also can be used to develop a basis for counteraction methodology. From the system analysis perspective, the based elements of the system are inmates, suspects and convicts, as well as those, who bears the inmate subculture values. These elements can be divided into specific groups, where every group will be a subsystem, and the inmate subculture can be considered a complex open system. Although it should be noted that it is rather debatable to define the inmate subculture as a pure example of an “open system”. However, despite its institutionally closed nature inmate subculture as a system has a profound information exchange with other social systems. Moreover, this system has a certain impact on the traditional value system.

In order to create the possibility of the effective system analysis applying, it should be taken into consideration that any complex system consists of many interacting components (subsystems). Those complex systems have 12 characteristics (Tarasenko, 2004), and the inmate subculture contains each of those characteristics. 12 complex system's characteristics can be divided into 3 groups: system's static characteristics (integrity, openness, internal heterogeneity, structure), system's dynamic characteristics (functionality, stimulability, over time system's variability, changing environment existence), system's synthetic characteristics (emergence, indivisibility into parts, inherency, expediency).

#### **5. Research Methods**

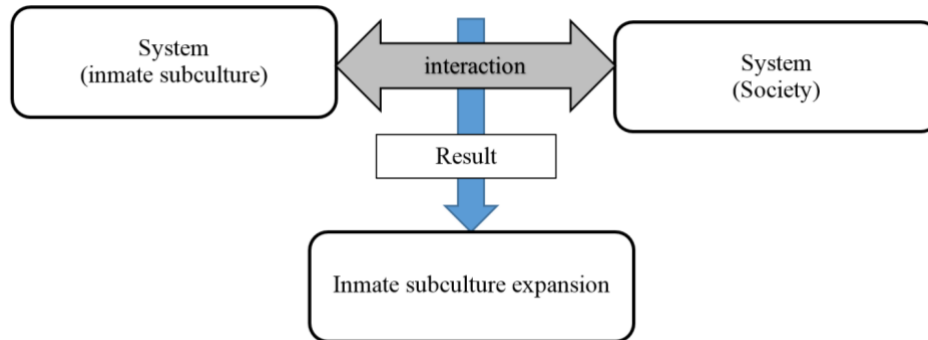
In this research, the authors focus attention on the synthetic characteristics of inmate subculture system from the point of the set-theoretic analysis.

The synthetic characteristics of any system are understood as its interaction with the environment. Without any doubt, the system integrity is very important, as well as new characteristics arising as a response to the changing environment.

##### **5.1. Emergence**

By emergence it is meant new systems characteristics arising during the interaction with the environment when these new characteristics have not been observed previously. The vivid example of emergence for inmate subculture is the crime reproduction and spread while interacting with society (which

we consider as another separate system). It is not difficult to predict self-destruction of all criminal groups (groups of inmate subculture carriers) if they are excluded from the society (Figure 1).



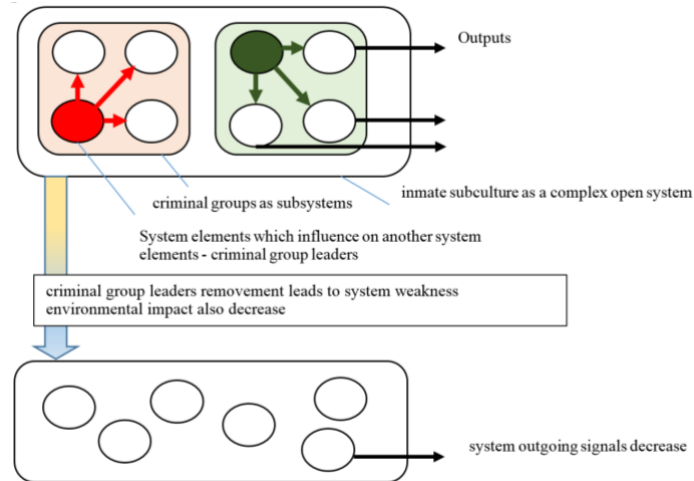
**Figure 01.** Inmate subculture expansion as a complex system synthetic characteristic (emergence)

The source of emergent with the environments is the structure of the system and the interaction of its elements: with different structures, characteristics can manifest themselves in different ways when they interact with other systems. It should be noted that the system acts as a single entity because it is a carrier of an emergent characteristic: it will lose its entity if this characteristic disappears, and if this characteristic appears, then the system obtains the entity. In practice it means that separately each inmate subculture element cannot affect the traditional culture, but the effect will be manifested when the elements are combined into subsystems for example criminal groups.

## 5.2. Indivisibility into parts

Indivisibility into parts as a characteristic is a logical extension of the emergence. The essence of this characteristic is that if you remove any element, group of elements, subsystem from the system, the system loses its characteristics (or loses them partially), The number of outgoing signals and the environmental impact can also be lost. At the same time, the excluded part also loses part of its characteristics.

For the topic we are considering, the most striking example is that if leaders are removed from the criminal groups (which are subsystems in this case), then with a high probability such groups will either weaken or cease to exist. As following, the system development potential will decrease on a whole, and this means that the response number (system outgoing signals) will decrease. Thus, environmental impact also will decrease (Figure 02).



**Figure 02.** Inmate subculture expansion as a complex system synthetic characteristic (indivisibility into parts)

Thus, by means of identifying as significant system elements and then eliminating them (for example, isolation of the criminal group leaders) it can be achieved a potential effect reducing the inmate subculture expansion. From the system analysis point of view, this property can be shown as a property identifying the system elements that have the greatest influence on its response (outgoing signal).

### 5.3. Inherency

Inherency is understood as a property describing how the system is adapted to the environment. The degree of inherency can also be different – there is evolution, degradation, development, training, etc.

The fact that the system is open does not mean that it can be well adapted to the environment and to the changing environment. Each system can have its own, special, optimal environmental conditions. The degree and quality of the elements existence depends on how much the system is compatible with the environment. In a natural environment, inherency increases due to natural selection, in artificial ones – due to the creators of this artificial environment.

It should be noted that inherency is not an absolute system property, but it is tied up to some specific function. Depending on what functions the system performs and what functions are required in the environment, it depends on how much the system will develop. For the inmate subculture, this can be expressed in the fact that if the legal system is weakened and discredited, and the living standard decreases (the poverty prevalence or a large gap between rich and poor and a low middle class percentage), then the inmate subculture will develop.

### 5.4. Expediency

Expediency is understood as the goal that the system pursues throughout its existence. Accordingly, when changing goals, the system will change. In this case, the inmate subculture as a system will support several goals that can be divided into main and secondary ones. The main goals include:

- the inmate subculture expansion;

- the destructive social patterns spread in the maximum number of society strata as a result of the criminal asocial marginal and illegal behaviour expansion;
- the inmate subculture penetration in all social, cultural and political social institutions.

As secondary goals it is possible to distinguish:

- an increase in the alcohol / drug addicts and socially dangerous diseases, since the inmate subculture does not have the idea of maintaining a healthy lifestyle, but, on the contrary, have the cult of stable alcohol and drug use;
- the social middle class destruction (as the main bearer of traditional humanistic values), and as a result, the social stratification into super rich and super poor.

## 6. Findings

The research stated that in modern Russia the inmate subculture has become one of the most important factors degenerating of the social patterns in cities that negatively affects traditional social and cultural institutions. Moreover, it can be supposed that this influence is degrading and very dangerous for the cities civilisation and can become critical for their development. From the system analysis point of view, it can be assumed that conducting a global and more detailed study in this area will create effective methods to counteract the inmate subculture expansion. Such methods can be implemented: in developing effective state criminal and penal policy; in the professional education for the penal system staff by developing models and techniques that counteract the inmate subculture destructive influence further; in organizing re-socialization and social adaptation for inmates, as well as post-prison support.

## 7. Conclusion

In support of longstanding arguments that inmate subculture plays a major role in the identity and behavior of individuals after their release from prisons as well as for their family members and staff of penitentiary institutions. We find that possible inmate subculture expansion will become one of the most dangerous threat for traditional culture in Russia. Because of that countermeasures development based on the system analysis is of the greatest importance. The research gives the possible trends for such a development and helps to understand the dynamics of the expansion.

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