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**TRANSFORMATION OF WORK AND LEISURE AGAINST THE
BACKDROP OF SOCIAL INEQUALITY**

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Abstract

In this paper, the authors analyze social class dimension in post-socialist countries, particularly in Russia, in the context of the intellectual class. Making an example of Russian society, main trends and features of social inequality and poverty are also considered. The notion of “poverty as an attitude to life” vs “poverty as objective state” is discussed and such two positions are differentiated with reference to the intellectual class. Analyzing the stated problem and focusing on Russian society, the authors come to the conclusion that the Russian population, as a post-socialist state, does not struggle with poverty in the minds of people, and such issues as low wages come to the fore. As a result, the authors conclude that the prevention of poverty in Russian society and any other post-socialist society requires a strong social policy of the state aimed at supporting people, who are objectively below the poverty line, and who are not able to overcome the poverty line. At the same time, authors conclude that involvement in leisure activities can be explained more by the notion of cultural capital than by the notion of economic capital.

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1. Introduction

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, there was a bifurcation point for social, economic and political structures of society in the countries that were formerly part of the USSR. During this period, new social and structural features, which were primarily related to the transformation of the economy, namely, the change of the structural form of the economy, began to form. In particular, the system of ownership of the means of production has been changed. However, over time, the economies of the former Soviet Union countries, and Russia in particular, came to a stable form of capitalist structure. Due to this fact, one can already say that Russian society starts to acquire an equilibrium form of social structure (Tikhonova, 2007). Perestroika has brought about new political processes, such as restoration of the system of private property and privatization of the former public wealth by a narrow circle of people, as well as the substitution of the planned economy to the market one, destruction of the Soviet institutions of power, abandonment of socialist ideology, etc.

2. Problem Statement

Russian society followed the path of capitalism, changing property relations, as well as destroying the former socialist social institutions and replacing them with new ones (Gonashvili, 2015). In the late 90s, the features of the existing social groups, layers and classes began to change in Russia. New social relations and social practices of interaction, which basis consisted of new relations of property rights distribution, replaced the former relations. Yaroshenko noted that discussions about new poverty in Russia emerged almost immediately after a series of neoliberal market reforms of the early 1990s designed to return the Soviet country to capitalist rails and destroy the system of state distribution (Yaroshenko, 2010).

The result of social inequality and poverty is related to property as the reflection of reality at all historical stages of society's development. Inequality historically arises with the emergence, growth and reproduction of surplus products, i.e. with the process of social division of labour, development of private property, classes and class relations. However, it is only in capitalism that inequality reaches enormous, unprecedented proportions. For example, several major capitalists have as much wealth as half the world's population does. This is the conclusion reached by Thomas Piketti, a world-renowned Western inequality researcher, in his book *Capitalism in the 21st century* (Piketti, 2015).

Before examining the features of social inequality and poverty in modern Russia and post-socialist countries, one should define the concepts of «social inequality» and «poverty». Poverty is a certain position of an individual, community, or country characterized by lack of necessary resources to stabilize universally recognized living conditions. Social inequality — uneven distribution of resources that characterizes individual's position in social space with the present social relations.

When studying social inequality and poverty according to Zaslavskaya, one should pay attention to the social hierarchy of scales and characteristics of social status. In her paper «Social Structure of Modern Russian Society», Zaslavskaya states that the main criteria of the status of social groups, and, accordingly, of social stratification of society are considered to be: political potential, expressed in the volume of power and management functions; economic potential, manifested in the scale of property, income and

living standards; socio-cultural potential, reflecting the level of education, qualification and professionalism of workers, especially those in the Russian Federation. All these criteria are interrelated to a certain extent, but at the same time they form relatively independent «axes» of stratification space (Zaslavskaya, 1997).

In other words, social status, e.g. poverty according to Zaslavskaya, is determined through political, economic, and socio-cultural potential connected with access to realization of this potential in society. The position of a politician in the definition of social stratification by Zaslavskaya, not economics, suggests that underdeveloped capitalism is considered, because capitalist property in developed capitalism defines all other types of relations. In other societies this principle can also be applied; it is another thing that property outside of capitalism or in underdeveloped capitalism is more strongly conditioned by political and ideological relations while in capitalism property rights as a commodity are cleared of obstacles that hinder market processes.

While discussing the poverty of Russian society and other post-socialist countries, it should be noted that according to Mareeva and Tikhonova, there are two main provisions with regard to the emergence of poverty in science, namely poverty: as a result of special attitude to life (the notorious 'culture of poverty', which is characterized by passivity, widespread dependency, etc.), and as a result of finding a person on a certain structural position (Mareeva & Tikhonova, 2016).

In our opinion, the first position clearly reflects the contemporary position of Medvedev, Trump, Soros, Potanin, Rothschild, and others – this is their science. However, even the second formulation is shamefully bourgeois, what does «finding a position» mean? As if it were the poverty of an individual, but it follows logically from the thoughts of Zaslavskaya. In our opinion, the point is that poverty is generated by a system of production, where different classes or categories of people have different access to property, and take different places in relation to it.

Following the logic of Tikhonova, we note that a group of scientists who adhere to the position of «poverty as a result of the attitude to life» study poverty from the standpoint of everyday practices of the poor, their values and motivations. The representatives of this direction are Gilbert and Kahl (1982). These representatives study poverty from the perspective of the attitude to life, and they distinguish two subgroups of the poor, namely, the poor directly and the «social bottom» (underclass). They consider the poor in the context of constructing a model of vertical stratification of society, and therefore they are included in the lower class, where two subclasses are distinguished, one of which is the. Another position on the study of poverty from the point of view of the structural organization of society considers poverty from the point of view of production relations, namely, the employment and unemployment. The latter, namely the presence or absence of employment, is the main criterion, by which scholars who defend this position distinguish the class of the poor. For example, representatives of this position are Coleman and Rainwater (1978) who in addition to employment distinguish the criterion of lifestyle, which makes it appropriate to talk about the emergence of a subclass of poor people called.

It is worth noting that it is characteristic of modern sociology to use subjective features, such as self-identification, as the starting point. In our opinion, within the domain of inequality research, one should primarily focus on material social relationship.

As we can see of the above approaches, there were individuals in the lower class who due to the specificity of the resources in their possession or lack of thereof, in principle, are not of interest as workforce to the economy. Such individuals can only find employment in the secondary labour market, namely, informal or temporary employment, which in turn affects their income, stability, as well as the social boundaries of their position. In support of this thesis, we believe it is appropriate to illustrate the results of an empirical study on the labor skills of the poor conducted by the Russian Academy of Sciences. The results were presented in an analytical report entitled «Poverty and Inequality in Modern Russia: 10 Years Later».

The aforementioned statements are not irrelevant to the case of the intellectual class in Russian society. As an area of leisure, sports practices are an integral part of consumption, in which their place correlates with other forms and ways of consumption. Thus, the involvement in leisure is consistent, supplemented and continued by those consumer aspirations that a person reproduces in the process of his life, the possibilities of alternative and subordinate to leisure activities. It means that leisure consumption is oriented to the entire social space with its various semantic forms that affect the processes of inclusion in leisure practices.

At the same time, the social structure itself is analyzed in the system of all existing social practices of leisure. A single type of leisure, or individual practices, can only carry the social and structural load, adjusted for the entire existing system of leisure practices. All elements of the social structure of leisure are interconnected and subordinate to the logic of the system as a whole. Access to a particular practice takes place in the plane of possibilities of all the existing leisure practices.

The social properties of leisure practices are related to the interests, attitudes and values of people whose social status shapes their attitude towards leisure. Those motivating reasons that lead a person to leisure time, mature under the influence of the entire social space of human activity. It is in the specific experiences of leisure practices are the answers to the needs of human orientation. And only those practices will be mastered that are able to adapt such orientations. At the same time, the prevailing social meanings of subjects who have mastered certain leisure practices and thus exercise control over their application, begin to affect the meaning content of the leisure practices they have mastered. Thus, leisure time is involved in the semantic space of the wide social field of human activity.

The experience of research into the social structure of leisure time raises a number of issues of general importance that make sense to the modern Russian reality. Based on these studies, we can conclude that there is a connection between the degree of access to leisure time and the level of social inequality.

3. Research Questions

It should be noted that poverty by deprivation is understood as deprivation of social status, i.e. associated with deprivation of one's status or income. Talking about the emergence of poverty and the perception of poverty in public consciousness using the example of Russia, it should be noted that poverty is manifested through the attitude and assessment of the phenomenon by society. According to an empirical study conducted by Mareeva and Tikhonova in 2003-2013 (2016) the attitude to poverty in Russia in 2013 has changed in comparative analysis with 2003, but the dominant attitude is still sympathy

for poverty, namely, 36%, and 16% of the Russian population treats poverty with pity. Combining these categories of Russians, one can say that more than half of Russians have condescending attitude towards poverty. However, if we speak in general, it should be noted that, compared to 2003, the attitude to poverty in 2013 is significantly deteriorating. If we talk about the level of poverty in the recent past, it should be noted that according to Rosstat, in 2018 almost 23% of minors in Russia lived in families with incomes below the minimum subsistence level. The highest poverty rate among children was registered in families with many children – 49.4%. The number of minors living in poor rural families was 40.6%. Thus, for example, the child poverty rate is almost twice as high as the national indicator: 18.4 million people, or 12.6% of the population, lived below the poverty line (including children) in 2018. To measure poverty, Rosstat uses the concept of absolute poverty, where the income of the population correlates with the established poverty line – the minimum subsistence level. In 2018, the minimum per capita subsistence level in Russia as a whole was 10,287 rubles, and in 2019 it was 10,890 Rubles. Returning to the discussion of the study conducted by Tikhonova, it should be noted that according to the study nowadays the majority of Russians see the cause of poverty in the poor themselves, namely, their laziness and failure to adapt to living conditions.

Thus, the poverty situation in Russia, even under crisis conditions, is no longer due to the general economic situation (as it was in 2003), but rather to the 'wrong' behavior of the poor themselves or the misfortunes that have occurred in their families and have not been properly compensated by state social policy measures (Mareeva & Tikhonova, 2016).

Therefore, it may be noted that as the attitudes and perceptions of poor Russians change, poverty itself becomes differentiated. Different categories of poor people can be identified in the image of poor Russians. The poor, to whom the majority of Russians are lenient, are, as a rule, those people who have acquired the status of poor objectively, for example, due to the loss of a breadwinner or due to illness, etc. The other one is when the poor have obtained their social status because of their personality traits. The attitude towards the latter category of the poor in Russian society is deteriorating every year. It is important to emphasize that Tikhonova in her research divides economically active Russian society into four groups, namely, the marginal position, the middle class, the working class, and the lower class formation zone (Tikhonova, 2011). Let us define each position: the lower class formation zone is a group of people with specialized education, with a middle level of income and a low standard of living.

Tikhonova states that the middle class includes those who were simultaneously characterized by a combination of criteria such as non-physical nature of labor; availability of at least specialized secondary education; average monthly per capita income is not lower than their median values for this type of settlement or the number of available durable goods is not lower than the median value for the population as a whole; self-esteem of an individual of his or her position in society on a ten-point scale of not less than 4 points. In the composition of the working class - those individuals of physical labor who did not fall into the zone of the lower class formation (Tikhonova, 2011).

The marginal position is the position in which individuals receive low wages below the minimum subsistence level. What is important is that in this category one can see the alienation of a stable social position. Consequently, the social group of poor people occupies its niche in the marginal position, which according to Tikhonova, constitutes 26% of all Russian society.

4. Purpose of the Study

If one tries to consider social inequality in post-socialist countries in comparative ratio, the first thing to pay attention to is Gini coefficient, which shows the stratification of society in the country in relation to its income. Following the work of Eremicheva and Evdokimova (2010), the authors use in the present paper Gini coefficient statistics.

The largest income inequality in 2007 was in Russia and the smallest one in the Czech Republic (Mareeva & Tikhonova, 2016). According to a study conducted by Eremicheva and Evdokimova on the attitude of Russian citizens to inequality, the negative attitude causes not social inequality in itself, but its redundancy, as well as unfair distribution as its source (Eremicheva & Evdokimova, 2010).

The authors conclude that, although Russia is the country with the highest income disparity, the issue of inequality is less pronounced in Russia than in the other countries. In our opinion, this is related, as mentioned above, to the attitude towards poverty in Russia, namely intercountry analysis data have shown that among the surveyed post-socialist countries there are those where the problem is more acute, although objective quantitative indicators of social inequality are lower. In this connection, it can be assumed that the impact of inequality as a threat to equilibrium in society is not the strongest in Russia (Eremicheva & Evdokimova, 2010).

Often the issue of inequality of leisure practices is considered, first of all, from the point of view of accessibility, leaving in the shadow of differences in social hierarchical ways of realizing a personality in sports. It is from this point of view that equality in relation to leisure implies universal involvement in leisure practices. Therefore, organization and infrastructure of leisure have weight in addressing the issue of public involvement in leisure time. However, they are the ones that usually give rise to differences in access based on income, power, education, or professional employment.

5. Research Methods

The main research method is content analysis. The authors analyse social inequality and poverty in post-socialist countries, particularly in Russia, in the context of the intellectual class work and leisure activities. Making an example of Russian society, main trends and features of the intellectual class are considered..

6. Findings

Russian society is still in the process of transforming the social structure left from the Soviet system into a typical structure of the capitalist type, with private ownership dominating and market relations. In our view, the capitalism system has already been developed. A state that has embarked on the path of capitalism is no longer a relic of socialism, despite the fact that the officials have Soviet experience. The strengthening of the state in the economy is simply a crisis trend of capitalism itself. Many states resort to this experience in times of crisis, but still act for the benefit of the rich, for the sake of capitalists, even if there are some national capitalists. However, the level of Russia's welfare has not yet reached the indicators of developed capitalist countries.

7. Conclusion

Nevertheless, it is important to understand that Russia has not yet entered the state of capitalist periphery. With regard to poverty in Russia and post-socialist countries, it may be noted that the transformation of the poverty portrait in people's minds in the last ten years and the consolidation of a certain image of poverty in people's minds is less and less in the form of sympathy and pity for this category. The category of the poor in modern living conditions in the minds of Russians is moving further and further to its periphery, which, in turn, leads to the fact that the socio-economic policy of helping the poor is further and further off the agenda of the politicians and Russian society as a whole. Given this perception of the poor in the minds of people, poverty is perceived as not being the most acute social problem, which in turn leads to certain social consequences. As a result, from our point of view one can say that the social structure of Russian society in the last quarter of a century has shifted from a society of mass poverty to a society of total poverty. This has resulted in changes in society's needs and in the priority of a strengthened social policy. This is evidenced by empirical research conducted by the Russian Academy of Sciences (Institute of Sociology, 2013). In our view, the Russian population, as a post-socialist country, does not face the struggle against poverty in the minds of people, but rather issues such as poverty and low wages come to the fore.

Eremicheva and Evdokimova (2010) came to the conclusion that, comparing opinions on almost all issues among countries, Russia finds itself among the countries with the most negative attitude to social inequality, its origins and consequences - and, accordingly, needs close attention and effective measures to mitigate it. The lack of sufficient attention to the problems of social inequality becomes a brake on the successful implementation of various social policy measures, and the resulting negative social background hinders favorable economic and social development of the country (Eremicheva & Evdokimova, 2010).

To prevent poverty in Russian society and any other post-socialist society, in our opinion, a strong social policy of the state is needed, aimed at supporting people who objectively fell below the poverty line, who have no possibility to overcome the poverty threshold. This requires the institutions of social security and social protection of the population, both in Russia and in post-socialist countries, is fully operational.

At the same time, many authors conclude that involvement in leisure activities can be explained more by the notion of cultural capital than by the notion of economic capital. At the same time, it recognizes the attraction of the richest segments of the population to special types of leisure activities, i.e., sports practices imbued with the social meaning of exclusivity. Thus, taking into account the social structure of leisure time, one can see a picture of inequality of involvement of different segments of the population.

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