

Features of civil activity of the Russian modern society in social development of the territory

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Abstract - In modern societies special attention is paid to the opportunities of civil activity of the population to solve some problems concerning social development of the territory. This is focused on the praxeological significance of this activity: the transfer of different social groups' interests which are involved in the structure of life-like and social space takes place and the estimation of the particular changes is realized. However, the social practice of civil activity demonstrates the contradictory origin of such actions. In addition to the real activity based on the awareness of clear directions and measures of self-complicity, the delusive and symbolic actions of the population are realized. The paper is focused on the features of civil activity of the population in the modern Russian society. The paper examines the key sociological approaches to determine the civil activity and the modern forms with taking into account new information and communication technologies.

Keywords - civil activity, civil participation, slacktivism, social development, social interaction.

I. INTRODUCTION

In modern Russian society the social practice of participation of local community to solve the problems of social development of the territory has been actualized. Opportunities to diagnose the problem issues of the territory, to identify and correlate the measures and forms of possible civic complicity for solving them facilitate the formation of the complex comprehensive analysis of the problem and the increasing social and political risks being needed to make managerial decisions.

The relevance of the presented study lies in the fact that in recent decades the civil activity of the population has been changing meaningfully, and there have emerged new specific features, and all of these are reflected on the being realized in the modern Russian society forms of community participation in social development of the territory.

II. METHODOLOGY

Civil activity is the term appreciated by the humanities only in 1980s, although it has a long history [1]. In the concepts of Russian sociologists of the end of XIX – the beginning of XX century (M. M. Kovalevsky, P. A. Sorokin, K. M. Takhtarev) the human and civil destiny is shown with

regard to the proper behaviour to develop the government and its democracy foundation. Features of civil activity are presented in the studies of J. Ortega y Gasset (in which civil activity is considered as the feedback response of mass society to the over-organization of ruling political class); J. Habermas (the activity is viewed as the oriented actions of social groups manifesting the private interests and those who are aimed on the reorganization of institutional order and its normative-valuable bases); T. Parsons (that pays the great attention to civil activity, i.e. the real autonomic participation to realize the social and civil status of a personality); P. Burdye (civil activity is defined as the form of social interactions to create 'social capital'); E. Giddens (the authority is established on the level of local regional centres in which the leading role plays social and civil associations and others).

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In modern Russian scientific literature the civil activity is defined as 'the form of social activity directed into realizing social interests and being specific for the individuals and for different civic associations' [2], and as 'the prosocial activity identified by specific features being specific for the civil society' [3].

The number of specific features of the civil activity should include the following things: the initiative, the personal autonomy, the link with the realized local politics of the territorial development and also the access to the political resources. The priorities of social development, in terms of personality concept, are focused by the context of living and social spaces. The issues of social adaptation, the opportunities for social practice having access affect directly the quality and the intensity of civil activity. This type of activity is based on the pursuance of getting social needs having the different degree of the subjects' manifestation. The number of modern social needs of the territory should include the following things: the improvement of the municipal authority's organization and activity including the citizen participation to make managerial decisions; the territorial infrastructure; the creating social infrastructure according to the modern requirements; the reimbursement of resource depletion; the increasing of quality and the extending of the sphere of social services; the information saturation which is sufficient for the citizen participation in generally valid for the

territory social and political processes; the development of human potential for the territory and others.

The civil activity is closely linked with its participation in the social and political life of the community. In the wide sense, this participation is considered as ‘the situational practice’ realized within the particular territorial and social space with specific political, social, cultural and historical features [4].

Some foreign authors often consider the citizen participation as the citizen ‘vertical participation’ in ‘state affairs including the participation in political and managerial processes’ [5]. The citizen ‘horizontal participation’ including the participation in the public activity and other spheres of informal associative activity is classified as the social participation.

R. G. Apresyan indicates that the idea of the citizen participation supposes the involving the managed individuals into the managing process that is the opportunity to estimate and participate in the diagnostics of socially important decisions. The principle of citizen participation means that the interests of the whole sections of the society should be presented in the political space [6, p. 8-9].

The citizen participation to make decisions concerning the issues of social development of the territory is sufficiently new for the Russian social practice. However, the results of social interrelation of the population with the government are significant for estimating and diagnosing the strategic development of the local territory. The personality civil activity is beneficial for the political establishments [7], which are oriented into the points of view of different social groups; however, they may not pay attention to the ‘hidden’ everyday routine. As a rule, the government deliberately stimulates the civil activity. At the same time, in the government’s efforts to break away from the citizens’ control it tries to change the order of their activity into the accessory and minor problems. In the real practice by words of an American researcher, S. Arnstain, the real citizen participation is very often adjacent to symbolic and delusive shapes to attract the population to make some social decisions [8]. Modern Russian researchers note that in most cases ‘the focus of public attention is concentrated on some minor events, frequently of scandalous trait, but the essential events and processes ... proceed latently and inertially’ [9].

Some modern researchers claim that the social activity depends on the individual’s social capital and on the resource support. So, based on the performed study, E. V. Bogomolova, E. G. Galitskaya, Y. A. Kot and E. S. Petrenko drew the conclusion that depending upon the realized civil activity the following personality types may be distinguished: ‘volunteers’ (8%); ‘participants of socializing leisure practices’ (9%); ‘activists’ (12%); ‘altruist’ (13%); ‘common citizens’ (15%); ‘common web-residents’ (20%); and ‘civil outsiders’ (23%) [10].

At the present stage we may stand out the following features of the civil activity of the Russian population in the social development of the territory:

- the citizen participation in the social and political development has situational and fragmentary traits;

- the civil activity is directed to solving acute contradictions; however, as a rule, it is eliminated in the cases of long-term strategic development of the territory so the reactivity but not the proactivity is in evidence;
- the citizens’ commitment to the utilitarian aims is focused on the solving a particular concerning problem in the sphere of municipal government or in the specific social sphere, and moreover, there has not been the proper systemic and constructive participation [11];
- the weak daily civil activity in the public sphere is significantly due to the ‘rational choice’ of citizens: if the social and political activity does not give any financial and career benefits it is eliminated;
- the citizen participation in the development of the territory has the local trait, as a rule, i.e. it is directed to solving current problems of the territory, for example, infrastructure development of the current habitat;
- the civil activity more and more is moving to the virtual space, and the civil online activity is becoming actual;
- the traditional forms of civil activity are becoming transformed, and the new ones based on the information and communication technologies have been emerged.

When choosing the tools to be employed in the interaction of social territorial development with the civil society it is important to take into account the social sentiment and potential risks. As noted by the Russian researchers, one of the concerning problem of the present Russian society is the crisis of confidence. The beliefs about ‘the all issues will be solved without us’ are well preserved. At the same time, the number of the Russian people with losing priority of the state interests towards the rights of some individuals in their consciousness is increasing [9].

The majority of the population is getting busy with the primary professional activity, the household concerns and the existential threats. People are not ready or do not wish to take the responsibility for solving shared problems.

The practice of the citizen participation in the social development of the territory is loaded down with the deficit of material resources needed to realize the initiatives and civil projects, with the excess charge on the management structures to process information, to estimate the relevance and opportunities of the initiatives realizing.

In the capacity of the potential risks of civil activity in the social development of the territory we may note the following features:

- the involved large numbers of people make in many cases the improvisational and emotional action a priority to the rational one;
- the transfer of accents, the split of aims and tasks take place;

- the overloading of the communication networks caused by the information noises and by the excess information which is insignificant to make some decisions may be possible;
- sometimes the citizen participation results in the emerging conflict situations (for example, a discussion may turn into a heated debate and recriminations; the tensions between the groups of different interests may get worse; and the protest campaign between the population and the government may start);
- the civil online activity may facilitate ‘avoiding’ the real actions and occurring the internet trolls and haters.

At present, the traditional and new forms of the civil activity are being realized. The order of the citizen participation and its associations in the traditional forms is established by the Federal Law and the Regulatory Acts of the municipal government. The number of traditional forms should include the electoral activity, the participation in the activities of political parties and public organizations, the participation in the citizen meetings, the territorial public self-government, the public hearings, the public debates, meetings, conferences, the civil surveys, the petitions to the organs of municipal government, charity and volunteer activities.

The number of most popular activities among the citizens comprises first of all the participation in elections. The researchers of the electoral activity among the Russian population (O.V. Popova, A. I. Solovyev) [12, 13] approve of the negative type of identification among the electorate: the population is ready to declare what political powers not to be given the vote; however, the question what candidate or political party to be given the vote is problematic. The blurring of political orientations in the population is combined with the fragmentarily character to master the political practice.

In the world electoral practice (Australia, Great Britain, the USA, Estonia and the others) from the end of XX century the electronic voting as well as by means of the Internet has started to be used. In the scientific society and among the experts the debate about the domination of positive or negative characteristics of e-voting is taking place. The benefits of e-voting include the increasing electoral activity, particularly among the youth; the convenience due to the remoteness; the resource saving (financial, professional, temporary and other resources). The failures of e-voting comprise the sensitivity to the computer incidents, the hacker attacks, the opportunities of the ‘concerned people’ intervention through the hardware and software; the ‘digital inequality’ that is the discrimination against people not having the possibilities and not be able to deal with the advanced computer technologies; the violation of secrecy of the vote due to the electronically controlled identity verification of a voter [14, p. 360-361]. In spite of the existing failures this form to participate in the voting is high-potential for the Russian society.

The modern type of charity may be directed to the helping people and organizations as well as to the developing some socially important fields of activity (protection of the environment, historical and cultural landmarks and so on). According to the research of the Russian Public Opinion Research Center (RPOC) the dynamics of the Russians engaging into the charity activity has the positive character. So, if in 2007 50% of respondents claimed about the engaging

into the charity but in 2017 69% of them already did it [15]. More often, the charity forms implying the usage of information and communication technologies, such as the whip-round services (including SMS and online transfer) and the others are employed.

The new forms of civil activity may include the municipal foresight which is involving the local residents into discussion and determination of the directions of social and political development of the territory in the context of collaboration with the organs of municipal government and public organizations. This type of civil activity is based on the study of possible alternatives of social development due to the analysis of the current situation and the defining key indicators of life activity on the territory. The municipal foresight implies the direct interaction with the locals by means of the stakeholders’ analysis, the Delphi survey method, SWOT-analysis, model, scenarios and roadmap planning and the others [16].

Foresight implies the scenario building, the result of complex social planning with elimination of the moving powers of the development and determination of discrepancies and social risks. Alternatively to the methods of traditional predicting the method of foresight is not directed to predicting the hypothetic variants of social development but it assumes building of the model that based on local features of the territory is most favorable and praxeological.

Participatory budgeting is the process of the initiative budgeting reflecting the direct citizen participation in defining and choosing the items to be spent the budget means and in the follow-up control to realize the chosen projects. The flexibility of such practices allows to solve the current issues of territory management, to exhibit the civil activity, and to increase the degree of confidence to the government [17].

Crowdsourcing (‘a crowd’ is a large group of people or community and ‘sourcing’ is the process of resource using) is the mobilization of human resources by means of information technologies to solve the tasks facing the state and society. The specific character of crowdsourcing consists of employing the wide groups of people, their knowledge, experience and art potential to solve issues of social development of the territory. The basis of crowdsourcing is the civil activity of the population, its tendency to share the ideas with the authorized registered organizations which may sort and realize some rational proposals.

The failures of participatory budgeting and crowdsourcing are that the group of people participating in debates how to spend the budget means and how to solve the problem of territorial development is often not to be able to produce the effective solution because the people having contrary viewpoints do not accept the compromise.

The informatization and computerization of modern society are the factors to develop the civil activity in the Internet (or civil online activism).

To define online (virtual) civil activity it was introduced the term ‘slacktivism’ which combines two definitions: a ‘slacker’ meaning a lazy person and the process of activism. Slacktivism represents such form of civil activity as initiates the participation of the Internet users in solving issues of social development but it does not realize any real activities. Z. Bauman thinking about this form of online activity makes a

point that, at present, in the information society there has emerged the public self-disclosure as the main and most accessible practice where by the social networks are considered by the population as the key source of confidential information [18]. As a result, the sociologist describes that politics is changing into fascinating but 'safety, toothless and innocent' entertainment for slactivists. The demands of the population are flattening because the conscious gets the surface and fragmentary information about social and political development. However, the most important side effect of this activity is that it is formed the delusive understanding of the reality assembled as mosaic events reality of that are not tested for the truth.

On the contrary S.G. Ushkin notes that the information and communication technologies form revolutionary new opportunities to express the own civic position and collective mobilization. Social networks are considered as an 'effective, informative, mobilizing, solidarity and synchronizing resource where temporary, financial and emotional expenses are minimized' [19, p. 3-4].

IV. CONCLUSION

Thus, the civil activity depends on the strategies and tactics of interactions with the government. At present, the new forms of civil activity have emerged, where by the traditional forms more and more are substituted with the usage of information and communication technologies. Using digital technologies, on the one side, increases the possibilities of citizen participation to discuss and solve the problems of social development of the territory and, on the other side, facilitates the exclusion of real actions and results in the simulation of civil activity.

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