

Socially oriented non-profit organizations in the “smart” life support system

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Abstract. The social practice reflects the intersection of people’s social demands seeking to achieve comfort and safety in the living space and the potential resource capabilities of administrative organizational structures. The development of civil society shifts the development of institutional processes towards the “human” priority in the work of organizational city structures. The need of people to improve the quality of life determines the transformation vector of life support system, within which elements with new functions are formed. The research problem is the definition of the role of non-profit organizations (NPOs) in social rules and meanings of functioning. The authors believe that NPOs meet the requirements of human centricity and perform the facilitation function as an element of the life support system. “Side effects” associated with the activities of socially oriented NPOs, their interaction with the government and consumers of services, which are an obstacle to the sustainable development of the life support system, are also considered in the paper.

Keywords: non-profit organization, life support system, “smart” technology, side effects

1. Introduction

Multidirectional striving for complexity and balance determines the logic of the development of a social system. The emergence of new elements contributes to the streamlining of interstructural relations or leads to ambiguous consequences. The emergence of socially oriented non-profit organizations (NPOs) in the structure of the life-support system did not indicate functionally permissible boundaries and practices of responsibility in working with clients, interaction with other system structures. However, NPOs can play the role of life-support facilitator, with all the uncertainty of their status.

In science, life support is understood as a process and tool for preserving and sustaining life in extreme conditions. After the 1990s, the categorical content of this concept expanded, was supplemented by economic, social, political significance [1]. In sociology, the concept of “life support” emerged from the perspective of the theory of adaptation.

2. Materials and Methods

The authors believe that the life support system is a harmonious combination of traditional and civilizational (professional) subsystems, combining the practices of adaptation to living conditions, developed by the national culture, and life support technologies developed by professionals [2]. Today, a system with different senses of centering (performance guidelines) has been formed. The human-centered core provides an orientation to human needs, connecting the “two-winged” structure

into an integral life support system. Human centeredness allows one to turn to the help of organizations in difficult situations, to create self-help groups within the framework of a system operating on the principles of provision / self- provision. In reality, as a rule, the organizational sense of centrality functions, ensuring the work of the professional subsystem on the principle of clientelism.

The traditional and professional subsystems rely on social technologies of the humanitarian and organizational type. Humanitarian technologies (human format) are based on common values (self-help, mutual support practices). The work of social welfare agencies, the activities of “e-government,” etc. are based on organizational technologies (smart format). The prospect of developing a human-centered system implies the improvement and mutual interweaving of “smart” technologies of provision / self- provision.

“Smart” technologies (human) are humane, understanding the needs of different categories of the population. Another type of “smart” technology is professionally sound life support practices, the use of high-tech public service tools. Both types of technology are relevant, provide the basic needs of people. The organizational challenge is finding the balance between “smart” and “human.” A solution to this problem is the social institutions, organizations that promote a harmonious combination of technology subsystems of both types. The logic of social development stimulates people to create non-profit organizations for solving vital problems. NPOs are formed on an independent, intermediate position, being a binding (facilitating) tool for solving life support issues. NPOs become an intermediary between citizens and officials whose activities are limited to instructions.

The development of NPOs is related to the level of social maturity of a market economy, institutional environment, and civil society. As P. Drucker notes, “No any developed country can do without an autonomous, self-governing social sector, without public organizations that would provide the services needed by society, ... restore ... broken connections, they would restore a sense of active citizenship among every member of society” [3]. In his opinion, the main task of the non-profit sector is to promote the health and well-being of a person, to arouse a sense of civic responsibility. M. Lounsbury and M. Schneiberg [4] consider the institutional analysis of social movements as one of the promising areas for studying the processes in institutional fields, modeling dynamics in the development of movements, explaining results of their activities. Advantages and limitations of socially oriented NPOs as providers of social services are considered in the works of I. V. Marsiyanova [5] and V. N. Yakimets [6], well-known Russian sociologists.

The paternalistic traditions of state institutions determine the individual’s orientation towards adaptive strategies. Independence from government is based on self-provision strategies, which cannot resolve issues related to the competence of professional services. Opportunities for NPOs lay in leveling this contradiction, strengthening the principles of solidarity, cooperation, and civic responsibility.

3. Results

Biological, technological, social approaches, and system analysis are considered classical for studying the life support system. Each scientific approach is limited to the subject area and relevant tools. The authors believe that a combination of approaches based on the principles of interdisciplinarity allows solving methodological problems of a wider horizon. Focusing on analyzing only quantitative data will not lead to the desired result in terms of effectiveness and depth of research. The use of hybrid methodological complexes is relevant for the interpretation of nonlinear social processes in the life support system. The center of gravity is transferred from the sphere of narrowly focused approaches to the interdisciplinary plane for the study of multi-level social processes (micro-, meso-, and macro-).

The hybrid methodological complex includes interdisciplinarity as a conceptual basis, non-contradictory scientific approaches and their methods, tools, connecting the methodological potential of quantitative and qualitative paradigms. System analysis becomes a reference for the study of life support systems. It allows one to comprehend a complex self-regulating system, the relationship of internal elements and its interaction with the external environment. This is a research look at the

functional stability of social systems, filled with communications and communicating with other systems (N. Luman).

The biological approach makes it possible to assess the provision of the population with the necessary minimum of conditions (nutrition, protection from harmful effects). Technological approach focuses on the development of technology. The sociocultural approach “humanizes” theoretical constructions based on the principles of subjects’ activities in the living space, evolutionism, and historicism. It becomes possible to center theoretical constructs on the integration of social and cultural in the structures of human existence, on a value basis of understanding the development of social systems at different levels. The comparative approach with its methods of comparative analysis provides an opportunity to explore these system dynamics.

Hybridization enhances the methodological potential of any approach, reinforcing theoretical constructs by combining a set of analytical methods that match the chosen approaches. Hybridization is the mutual complement and strengthening of the research potential of each method. It enables the triangulation of data and interpretations [7].

The hybrid complex allows the researcher:

- a) Following the unobvious in the social situation, hearing the non-verbalized understanding hidden in the experience of everyday life (to combine scientific intuition and knowledge about society);
- b) Tracing typical, fundamental, and traditional in each element of the life support system in conjunction with a series of accidents (analyzing the intuitive immediacy of sociocultural experience, while maintaining the balance of objective-subjective analysis).

We define a number of methodological levels of hybridization in the construction of research complexes: (1) a level of paradigms and approaches (interdisciplinary hybridization); (2) a level of methods and research procedures (methodical hybridization); (3) a level of interpretations (hybridization of quantitative and qualitative types of data analysis). The methodology developed and tested by us will be concretized in further studies of NPOs as an element of the life support system.

4. Discussion and Results

Life support system solves the problem of providing conditions, resources for the realization of vital needs. It includes organizational-centric components (administrative organizational structures, non-profit organizations, local community associations) and human-centered (needs, interests, requests), which together define the rate and measure of adaptation to the space-time bases of life and activity.

Socially oriented NPOs are organizations that carry out activities aimed at solving social problems and developing civil society institutions. They are also called as “social service providers.” Non-profit organizations are aimed at developing social altruism in individuals [8]. Working on a voluntary basis and not having the goal of making a profit, these associations solve socially significant tasks. In contrast to administrative organizational structures, a non-profit organization focuses on people’s creativity and initiative. It is not focused on the possibilities for the manifestation of power. The principles of their activity are clarity, decisiveness, and moderate flexibility [9].

Trust is the basis of social interaction of the population with representatives of non-profit organizations. Foreign researchers note that effectiveness of the NPOs’ functioning is intangible, it is difficult to measure, it is characterized by a high degree of properties of experience and faith. Such organizational structures are “asymmetrical” in essence: a person receiving a service or objects of a subject-material environment does not provide resources in return and does not incur costs [10].

Socially oriented NPOs are a connecting component between organizational centric and human-centered systems. First of all, NPOs are the organizations with activities aimed at achieving specific goals and objectives. But at the same time, they take into account the “degree” of social attitudes. The emergence of NPOs indicates the relevance of the spectrum of socially significant problems. Services provided by socially oriented NPOs are targeted due to proximity to consumers, which is more diversified and less standardized than state.

Non-profit organizations play an important role in the formation and development of civil society. They introduce new elements of self-government into public relations, focusing on the priority of social and legal values, creating in citizens confidence in the parity of their status in relation to the state and social institutions. Non-profit organizations are intended to change the public consciousness of citizens, reorienting it from recognizing the priority of values of power and power to the priority of values of equality before the law. Also, they are designed to stimulate the rejection of administrative organizational structures from decision-making management methods. The result of NPOs is the formation of citizenship and social activity. A person who was a client of an organization yesterday can volunteer today.

However, in the course of developing and running socially oriented NPOs, manifestations of “side effects” are possible. They are related to the activities of the organizations themselves, their interaction with the authorities and consumers of services. “Side effect” is an undesirable effect that reduces the stability of the position of socially oriented NPOs in the life support system.

- The effect of distrust on the part of authorities. Inconsistent attitude to the activities of non-profit organizations providing social services: the government delegates to them some functions of caring for certain socially vulnerable categories of the population without having full confidence in these organizations.
- The lag effect is characterized by the fact that citizens appeal in the wake of unsuccessful applications to administrative organizations. In connection with the failure to meet deadlines for considering issues, the solution of problem situations is delayed or rejected. This effect is the most common.
- The effect of public perception of NPOs as an “unstable” organizational structure is manifested in connection with low awareness of their activities. These organizations are in the area of hidden opportunities in addressing issues of livelihood.
- The effect of redistribution of roles and functions in the organization is associated with the turnover of staff in public organizations. Volunteering is eventually replaced by pragmatic, aimed at obtaining material benefits.
- The effect of deprivation is manifested in the social isolation of representatives of the local community: the “proven” people are allowed to solve problems in a crisis situation.

Braking barriers to the development of a life-support system are paternalistic ideology and an orientation towards consumption. Joint efforts of NGOs, authorities, and the public are required to minimize the “side effects.”

5. Conclusion

Modernization processes determine the development of life-support technologies for the smart format, strengthening organizational-centric structures of the system. With all the relevance of introducing such technologies, technologies of humanistic content (human format) remain in demand, because they retain the traditional forms of life support in the social memory of the population, corresponding to the human-centered constructs of the system. The combination of these technologies corresponds to the ideal structure of a life-support system. Such a system has necessary flexibility, “adjusts” its elements to respond to the challenges of life situations. Socially oriented NPOs contribute to the renewal of the life support system, improving and increasing its efficiency.

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