

Self-organization of Society and the Mechanisms of Its Functioning

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Abstract—Society is seen as a matrix of dynamic emerging integrity with different layers of phenomena. The functioning of society is based on self-organizational cycles. The presented generalized model of society not only uncovers the links and levels of self-organization, but also shows the conditions necessary for its activation on the example of Russia.

Keywords—*self-organization, integrity, superposing processes, social reflection*

I. INTRODUCTION

The development of methodologies to demonstrate the theoretical validity and systems logic of the role(s) of self-organization in society has been a priority for many researchers since the 1960's [1,2,3,4]. The Russian domestic and international literature at the beginning of the XXI century documents these research interests in a series of stand-alone approaches to the issues of self-organization: synergistic approach [5]; conflictological [6]; the constructivist [7]; the innovative [8]; the epistemological [9,10,11]; cultural [12]; the system changes approach [13] and several others. The self-organizational understanding suggests that the development of society is not predetermined and that social systems have the property of nonlinearity; that disorders in the dynamic functioning of society are vital to its development; that certain regimes of social systems have special characteristics. But a generalized self-organizational model of society which represents it in a variety of multidimensional qualities and characteristics, which reveals the dynamics of the formation of self-organizational processes and mechanisms of influence on them, has not been developed yet.

II. A SELF-ORGANIZATIONAL MODEL OF SOCIETY

A proposed self-organizational model of society is based on the concept of society as a complex form of integrity with a special type of causality, expressed by subjectivity with different layers of phenomena. According to this model society is a multidimensional entity, which includes individual social subjects (individuals, social groups, organizations, institutions) and the phenomena of morality, law, and other forms of social reflection, as well as social subjects interactions, exchange of information, goods, services (visual mechanisms of interaction) and also invisible mechanisms of interaction, which are inaccessible for the external observation. However, there is a need for an integrative reflection of these different layers of the social phenomena. These layers are combined by a logic system, which was not disclosed in previous studies and which is put into

the basis of the currently presented self-organizing model. It is necessary to differentiate a layer of externally observable phenomena in a society from the layer of abstract characteristics of social reflection processes. Methodological considerations suggest it is expedient to distinguish three levels of such layers which are associated with qualitatively different processes.

A Conventionally bottom layer phenomena of society as a social integrity comes to the fore, if we analyze a society from the empirical point of view (as an external observer). For sociologists, this empiricism requires that reality is considered only in the form of visibility, i.e. direct observation and fixation, regarding: individuals, small groups, organizations, and their activity. Society appears as visible components (social actors) and their interactions. This position relates to theories of social behaviorism.

An intermediate layer of phenomena in social integrity exists in the form of superposed-reciprocal processes. These processes stem from the fact that people, groups and organizations are always subsumed in the whole of society – into its integrity. This integrity can be evidenced in different forms: as a common activity, a unified territory, general culture, or a single state. Entering into any form of integrity always requires some alignment, reciprocity, balancing, and harmonizing with the bottom layer components. The processes of reciprocity (superposing) are found in a wide range of phenomena; from a single living cell to any social group or society [14]. Externally the processes of superposing manifest themselves in the form of interactions of social actors. These interactions are inevitable since entering into the integrity involves reciprocity among its elements.

A top layer evolves from the varied new qualities arising from the superposing of the components of the bottom layer (individuals, small groups, organizations, etc.). The chief among these new qualities is social reflection (in the form of managerial decisions, legislation - different forms of society's self-awareness and self-regulation).

The self-development of society as a social integrity is carried out in accordance with the following conceptual scheme: individuals, groups, organizations, located within the framework of the total integrity have to go through the stage of superposing of their actions, interests and goals. They have to generate new qualities which superpose their actions and goals. Further on these new qualities in the various forms of social reflection correct social subjects' behavior.

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Self-organization acts first as a movement from the bottom to the intermediate and top phenomena layers and then as a reverse impact of the top layer to the bottom layer components' behavior. Processes, beginning with the level of individuals, social groups are conceptualized as a closed loop phenomena. These cycles are the basis of societal development mechanisms over both long and short time intervals [14,15].

Social self-organization involves the formation of various forms of reflection, self-reflection, their synthesis and their inverse impact on what is happening in society. This appears to be quite universal and is manifested in all societies and in all stages of social development. Therefore self-organization is generated, firstly, by the trend of superposing and, secondly, by its results as new qualities that superpose the interests and settings of individuals or social groups.

In accordance with this concept, a society in which the self-organizational cycle functions are effective, will facilitate the processes of social actors' interests matching; as well as ensuring adequate social reflection, and consider the interactive effects on the lifestyles of individuals and social groups. Thus society would benefit, because all mechanisms of self-development would be engaged into its development.

The proposed model represents an idealized description of real social processes. The model enhancement is carried out at the following levels.

The first level (social subjects stirring up, energizing) involves social subjects initiatives to increase social competence; focusing on self-development orientation, using hidden resources, and promoting social creativity. The importance of the roles of such initiative subjects in self-organizational processes is extremely high, though their number in societies is usually low (5-7%), including Russia. The degree of self-organization of society depends directly on the number of such initiatives and socially competent citizens, without whom it would fall into a state of stasis and stagnation.

Second level- represents intensification of social actors' roles and coordination with social interests. At this level the coordination of social subjects takes place, the establishment of interest groups on the basis of common interests, and strongly defends these interests through unified activism to impact those departments, agencies, establishments, and related power structures (which frequently have high levels of fiscal and program resources).

The absence of authentic self-organizational processes to integrate the interests of different social groups has resulted in an excessive polarization of Russian society. The population reacts to this situation by perceiving it to be unfair and lacking in justice or equity. Under these conditions certain groups receive major resources, and others are not responded to at even minimal levels.

The various forms of social reflection perform the functions of interest(s) coordination among stakeholders, but these forms are slow to develop within the structures of the relevant agencies and authorities having power prerogatives. To be effective, these reflective coordination support functions require transparency and openness, with public discussions on various social policy and budgets items or socio-economic trends effecting one, or the

other regions of the Russian Federation. The regulators of such coordination quite often have vested interests. The State's solutions, evidenced by its policies, statutes, and regulations frequently do not take into account the interests of all groups. This lack of inter-coordination results in injustice and arbitrariness in policy and programs decisions or enactments. Conditions of real social reflection would provide underlying support for valid, comprehensive social development processes.

Third level - supports the intensification of social reflection qualities in development processes through social reflection considering the interests of society, as a whole, rather than discrete and disparate interest groups. Social reflection in the Russian society has been gravely impaired historically and has been limited to considering interests and viewpoints of select power or control groups. Optimally, these functions of social reflection should be supported by interdisciplinary teams of socio-humanitarian disciplines, but it is recognized that so far little has been done in this area. There are dangers in the energizing processes themselves: self-reflection of social community (including its policies, management decisions, law, and social morality) can emerge very slowly, meeting with a number of obstacles, for one reason or another. It can often be inadequate, lagging, or subordinated to the interests of elite groups and distort the reality of societal processes.

The fourth level – signifies promotion of the reverse effect generated by the qualities of reflection on the activism of social subjects, their activities, and to ensure that this impact is not lagging, and is supplied by resources. Often commitments can be made on paper, but implementation lags, or is never attempted. Resources may not be provided to carry out the reverse influence. This is a chronic limitation of the Russian society, which results in the development of multiple and chronic self-organization cycle obstacles.

A number of other levels are involved in initiating self-organization processes; particularly the level associated with the reduction or removal of various obstacles to the work of the self-organization cycle. The Russian society is represented by a large number of mentalities or mindsets, resulting in a variety of reflective forms, so the society is split into separate social groups, all of which perceive the society in different ways. A particular hindrance, on one hand is the fact that in Russia in the resource role of public reflection often obtained beautiful, but extremely abstract schemes, or utopian projects by which Russian ideas were characterized at particular times. This type of reflection led to dead ends and diversion of focus and resources from substantive improvements of society. On the other hand in Russia violence, coercion and terror took on the role of activators since ancient times.

III. SELF-ORGANIZATION PROCESSES OBSTACLES

You can put the question of why the self-organization cycles in Russian society are emerging with such difficulties? Why is it so sluggish in functions? Why there are so many chronic barriers impeding its development? What are strategies and tactics which will alleviate or eliminate these barriers to effective and equitable social planning?

In general, the following questions build the strategy. It is necessary to increase the adequacy of reflection processes and

the number of active initiative citizens; to identify the self-organization criteria, recognized by the majority of society's members; to make the public opinion and social activism be the activators of the self-organization cycle; to turn the creative potential, coming from various social groups, into the activator of the self-organization cycle; to identify the possible activators of self-organizational origins in society; and to neutralize emerging barriers impeding these activators' activities.

The obstacles to creative potential implementation actions often include the lack of response by power groups or control agencies to proposals from active individuals and/or initiative groups. This lack of response is frequently based on ignorance or bias, or on manipulation of people's standpoints and not reflecting them in policy or managerial decisions and legislation. Genuine self-organization can take place only when equal dialogue and mutual understanding of the authorities and the population are happening. It is necessary therefore to raise the status and possibilities of initiative teams, especially because they are presently the weakest element in collaborative processes with the legislative bodies, regulatory authorities and the private sector in Russia.

The self-organizational processes should not be hampered by the external environment. If in the external environment we do not find anything other than the State (with domination by its fiscal controls and regulatory structures), then instead of getting self-organization we receive an organization that only hinders the development of genuine self-organization. Under these conditions there is little opportunity for real consideration of people's initiatives or response to their activist activity. Thus the tools of the state are power, force, authority and bureaucratic control. The state relies on them in terms of attempts to regulate what is happening in society. Yet, parasitism and passivity have blossomed on the idea of dominant role of the state in Russia, as well as the conviction that all problems in society can be solved by using force and power. As is known from history, this approach ensures that the society will ultimately collapse, which is legitimate and predictable. However, the same elements can be seen in the approach to the social environment from the perspective of neo-liberalism. To illustrate, Russia made a commitment to the open market focus during 'perestroika', hoping that it would self-organize the society. Failures in that were quick to come.

A high level of self-organization in society requires both an individual activity and power structures responsiveness. People often are passive and do not support social initiatives in Russia, struggling to reconcile their own interests with others. These and other factors combine to inhibit self-organization development (there are certainly some explanations of this in the Russian history, such as people's historical memory of fear during the Stalin regime). The authorities on their part are also quite often indifferent to individuals or social activism. Therefore, explicitly or implicitly in the past it was assumed that building skills of independent thinking and solving problems for developing initiatives and leadership development were not needed. The State was responsible for everything. So it is natural even now to seek resources from the closest social structure to individual - from local, municipal authorities. The initiatives on this level take place in the sphere which affects the most direct vital

interests - housing, transportation, road conditions, traffic, trade, etc. All of this is the proximate personal environment.

It should be noted that principles of community management are one of the cornerstones of the self-organization processes of developed societies. It seemed that self-organization would happen in Russia, when a municipal management system was implemented after the fall of soviet regime. However, even after the developments of past 25 years the population does not show the necessary initiative in collaboration with the local authorities. More over the local government is not ready to interact with the population. Municipalities have legal insecurity, distrust of people for power elite, and a lack of necessary funding. Actually a community in its Western meaning did not develop in many urban environments - people quite often do not even know who lives behind the wall on the same floor. Eventually, instead of an active person and an active power structure we have highly passive social subjects who do not know how to interact constructively with each other.

It must be admitted that some technologies to increase the adequacy of community at the level of municipality have been developed. They are helpful in overcoming of so called the 'paralysis of consciousness' perceived in the general population. These technologies open the possibility for certain individuals and social groups to understand and articulate more clearly their situation and identify factors that negatively affect their economic, social and political interests. It is important to recognize the role and contributions of voluntary organizations, associations and territorial communities for the evolution of a self-organization society. Such voluntary associations, unions, organizations of people are a keystone to the foundation on which a responsive society is built - these unions of human potential are primary to the State and the Market. Their value is determined by the fact that in such complex integrity as a society it is impossible to program everything, anticipate all complications, manage all the events, and make all decisions from the top - the State level.

Conversely, the Open Market Economy cannot be expected to, in itself resolve the myriad of social problems facing any society. Fiscal considerations should be balanced by concern for citizen rights and human needs. New social movements (youth, greens, women', networks, etc.) have potential to help solve problems that cannot be solved by such means as the authority or money (socialization, cultural reproduction, social integration). It is through the framework of these movements the activated human capacity for self-organization and adequate reflection is born and prospers. However, the State is hard to separate from its claims for absolute power.

Up to now the process of defining goals for society development and for an optimum balance of the three sectors of society - the State, the market, and voluntary organizations and territorial communities - is still going on in Russia. This is despite the fact that the need for and enrichment of the potential of civil forms of self-organization of people has been long obvious.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Self-organization processes can evolve in different directions. They can be activated, primarily due to the growth in

activity and initiative of the social actors. When the number of initiatory groups is big enough and their activity is not eroded, the authorities cannot disregard their demands and influence. Many examples of successful community initiatives, especially in urban Russia are known and discussed by public. In general, any social group with appropriate articulation of its claims, consistency and perseverance in defending its rights can influence the power groups (authorities) and seek solutions of their problems.

A society that has a fairly large number of individuals with high activity and high adequacy for support of social reflection processes, in which the social subjects' interests' coordination is adjusted, and the self-organization cycle clearly functions – this society can be regarded as a truly self-developing one. Social reflection in these processes is the prime activator of the self-organizational cycle – it is its adequacy and timeliness that provide basis for effective reverse effect on the activities and behavior of individuals and social groups, modifying them in direction of maximum self-organization.

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