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Citizenship in Multicultural Communities in the South of Russia

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Abstract

The study deals with the analysis of citizenship as a perception, value, and attitude in mental programs of various social groups, determining their civic behavior in regional communities in the south of Russia. Characteristic aspects of citizenship as an attitude in the structure of mental programs determine civic practices involving the participation of respondents in civic initiatives and resolution of social problems. The methodological basis of the study of citizenship in regional communities in the south of Russia consists of a multidisciplinary approach that allows using information that was obtained in various fields of scientific knowledge. The multidimensional methodological construct of social research of the structure of mental programs as a set of perceptions, values, and attitudes that determine the civic engagement of various social groups is methodologically important for the study of characteristic aspects of citizenship. Findings of social research into perceptions of citizenship established in regional communities in the south of Russia, serve as an empirical basis. In the course of the study, the authors conclude that regional communities in the south of Russia are lacking a stable attitude towards civic participation, which allows drawing a conclusion about the low level of formedness of the culture of civic participation. The reason for social inertia consists of, first, the lack of belief in the effectiveness of joint civic activity in the majority of the population, second, in the lack of social trust in the regions of the South of Russia. Findings obtained allow us to understand the reasons for the low level of development of civic engagement in regional communities, which stem from etatist and paternalistic structures of mental programs impeding the formation of civic society institutions in multi-ethnic regions of the South of Russia.

Keywords: Culture, citizenship, civic engagement, civil practices, civic society, mental program, regional community, multicultural community, solidarity practices

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Introduction

Local civic engagement of individuals and social groups in regional communities is of key importance during social changes. In this regard, there has been a long-standing issue in Russia concerning the formation of civic society and the increase in the level of citizenship, which, as noted in one of documents of the Council of Europe, on the one hand, “implies that all citizens, men and women, must fully exercise human rights and feel that they are protected from democratic society. On the other hand, citizenship also implies that everyone has to be involved in issues relating to the life in society, and act as an active and responsible citizen respecting the rights of other people throughout his/her life” (European Year of Citizenship through Education, 2005; Vodenko et al., 2018; Vodenko, 2019).

However, there are certain problems in Russian society associated with citizenship as the willingness of an person to participate in social activities in an active and responsible manner, since, according to social research, “willingness to participate in the achievement of common goals” is exhibited by as little as 13 % of Russians, and as little as 3 % of respondents are willing to “assume responsibility for the situation in the country”. In this regard, it is telling that “as little as 11% of the population of Russia included in their three main dreams a desire to be helpful to society, to contribute in the development of the country” (Gorshkov, 2016, p.69),

Researchers point out that there is a certain agitation of civic engagement at the local level against the background of the low level of citizenship in Russian society today (Gorshkov, 2016, p.247). In this regard, the sociological study of citizenship in regional communities in multi-ethnic regions in the south of Russia, where national-state and ethno-national identities prevail, is of special academic and practical relevance (Patriotism, citizenship and solidarity in regional communities in the south of Russia, 2018).

Materials and methods

Citizenship in contemporary society is the subject of various disciplinary scientific research practices (Shevchenko et al., 2018). In particular, the academic interests of foreign researchers are centered on problems associated with the decline in civic engagement in developed countries, especially among young people (Adler & Goggin, 2005; Stolle & Hooghe, 2005; Putnam, 2000). Moreover, researchers pay special attention to characteristic aspects of civic engagement as a model of collective action in a modern information society (Simon & Klandermans, 2001; Johnson et al., 2010; Van Zomeren et al., 2004). Russian scholars turn to the problem of citizenship in connection with the problems of formation of civil society in the country (Galkina, 2006; Mersyanova, 2010; Nikovskaya, 2015; Yagodka, 2015; Kislitsyn and Sirazhudinova, 2018), while pointing out the low level of civic engagement of Russians (Russian society and challenges of modernity, 2005) and low citizenship potential of the Russian population (Sitnikova, 2014). In this regard, researchers, describing civic engagement as a characteristic of democratization of Russian society, pay special attention to factors of institutionalization of civic engagement in the context of formation of civic culture (Shestopal, 2011).

Certain aspects of citizenship in the south of Russia have already been the subject of scientific research, which are also considered in the context of formation of civic institutions in multi-ethnic regional communities (Lubsky, 2002; Galkina, 2006). At the same time, researchers point out that the complex ethnocultural structure of the population of South Russian regions significantly affects the forms of civic engagement in regional communities (Erokhin & Vorobyov, 2009; Sirazhudinova, 2012). In this regard, they distinguish three groups of ethnic communities in a multi-

ethnic space in the south of Russia, social behavior of which is based on traditional and civic values. Traditional values in the first group prevail over civic values; the second group is characterized by the convergence of traditional and civic values; and civic values prevail in the third group (Shaov et al., 2016).

As can be seen from the above, certain aspects of citizenship in the south of Russia have already been considered in the academic literature. In general, however, these topics have not yet been the subject of special social research. In this regard, the paper reveals special aspects of citizenship in regional communities in the south of Russia based on the analysis and interpretation of empirical information obtained as a result of social research.

The research study of citizenship in the south of Russia was based on a set of sources of empirical information, which includes findings of social research that was conducted by authors in 2018 using the method of individual “face-to-face” questionnaire in five territorial entities of the Russian Federation in the south of Russia (Rostov Region, Stavropol Territory, Republic of Adygeya, Kabardino-Balkar Republic, and Republic of Crimea). The representativeness of relevant research procedures was achieved through the implementation of a multi-stage stratified proportional sample (the sample was 2468 respondents). In addition to quantitative methods, social research used methods of qualitative operational analysis and theoretic interpretation of empirical information obtained.

Methodological difficulties which researchers who study citizenship in regional communities, face with, consist in the fact that there are various perceptions of the fact what citizenship in Russian society is in the modern academic discourse. Some of these perceptions are based on the academic thesaurus which has established in the west-European sociocultural context. In this context, citizenship as a quality of an individual is characterized by such features as “consciousness and responsibility, freedom (primarily freedom of choice) and creative focus, pro-active attitude and reflexive critical attitude to reality, self-actualization (subject's aspiration for the fullest unlocking of his/her potential) and self-identity (subject's aspiration for achieving the state of harmony with himself/herself)” (Reznik, 2010, p.308). Some scholars describe citizenship in the context of social and cultural characteristic aspects of Russian society as “a set of interiorized social norms regulating the relationship between society and government institutions”, based on an individual initiative associated with the ability of citizens to assume responsibility for the situation in society in the field of their social influence upon condition of legitimization of this initiative by the public authorities, supported by social expectations (Smirnov, 2011, p.253).

Within the framework of a multidimensional methodological construct of social research, citizenship was viewed as the structure of mental programs as a set of perceptions, values, and attitudes that determine the civic engagement of various social groups. In this regard, three aspects of studying citizenship in regional communities stood out: 1) cognitive, which includes respondents' perceptions of citizenship and its functions; 2) axiological, determining the significance of citizenship in the hierarchy of values of respondents; 3) conative, reflecting the willingness of respondents to participate in civic practices. The allocation of such types as socially active, competent, responsible citizenship and oppositional, critical, rebellious citizenship is of particular methodological significance for social research into citizenship in regional communities (Lubsky, 2017).

Findings

Empirical findings of social research are indicative of the fact that such perceptions of citizenship as “fulfilling one's duties as a citizen to society and the state” (26,5%), “comprehension of

one's rights as a citizen" (25,8%) and "respect for rights and freedoms of other citizens" (20,8%) prevail in regional communities in the south of Russia (see Table 1). Thus, three most significant aspects can be identified in respondents' perceptions of citizenship that relate these perceptions – first, to the formal nature of the relationship between a citizen and the state, second, to civic duty, and, third, to civic tolerance.

Table 1. Citizenship as a perception

Answers to the question: "How do you interpret the concept of citizenship?"	%
Comprehension of one's rights as a citizen.	25,8
Fulfilling one's duties as a citizen to society and the state.	26,5
Perception of moral duties to society and the state.	12,7
Participation in the resolution of economic, social, and political problems that are socially important for the country.	10,0
Respect for rights and freedoms of other citizens	20,8
Other	0,1
Don't know/No answer	4,2
Total	100,0

Findings of social research are also indicative of the fact that "mechanisms" of the formation of civic responsibility are still underdeveloped in regional communities in the south of Russia. This is evidenced by the answers of respondents to the question of whether they feel responsible for events at the domestic level. Responsibility is an attribute of citizenship, thus, the answers to this question go to prove that citizenship has not yet formed in mental programs as a special social value (see Table 2).

Table 2. Citizenship as a value

Answers to the question "Do you feel responsible for events at the domestic level? "	%
Yes	32,9
No	33,1
Don't know/No answer	29,8
Total	95,8
Skipped	4,2
Total	100

This situation is caused not only by etatist and paternalistic traditions in the relationship between public authorities and society, but also the underdevelopment of civic society institutions in contemporary Russia, estrangement between society and the authorities caused by the policymaking without regard to public opinion, as well as special aspects of civic socialization.

Its study as an attitude in the structure of mental programs which directly determines civic practices involving the participation of respondents in civic initiatives and resolution of social problems, is highly important for the understanding of special aspects of citizenship in regional communities in the south of Russia. Findings of social research are indicative of a low level of civic participation in regional communities in the south of Russia (see Table 3).

Table 3. Citizenship as an attitude

Answers to the question: "Do you take part in civic initiatives (activities aimed at improvement of entryway, yard, etc.)?"	%
Yes, I do	15,6
Yes, I do, occasionally	50,9
No, I don't	33,0
Total	99,5
Skipped	0,5
Total	100,0%

Quoted results demonstrate quite low level of self-organization of individuals, social inertia in the resolution of social problems of regional communities. Moreover, respondents attribute the lack of civic engagement to such reasons as the lack of time (11.9%); lack of belief in the effectiveness of joint civic activity (10.7%); lack of knowledge of where and how they can exhibit civic engagement (5.6%); lack of desire (5.4%); inability to exhibit civic engagement (4%). Hence, two social groups can be distinguished among those respondents who do not take part in civic initiatives: not involved (due to the lack of time, desire, and knowledge) and disappointed (due to the lack of belief that they can influence something, that civic engagement has sense).

In general, mental programs of the majority of the population in regional communities in the south of Russia are lacking a stable attitude towards civic participation. This goes to prove that respondents have not yet developed a culture of civic participation.

Discussion

Theoretical interpretation of empirical findings of social research into citizenship in regional communities in the south of Russia allows us to conclude that citizenship is hybrid in nature, manifested in that conservative and liberal perceptions, values and attitudes get along quite well in mental programs of respondents. Moreover, conservative structures of mental programs relate citizenship of respondents to their loyalty to the state in exchange for guardianship and social patronage. This is a kind of passive or "blind" citizenship as the basis of a conformist type of civic behavior which is characterized by a low level of spontaneous individual participation in public life and resolution of social problems in regional communities.

Liberal structures of mental programs that make conditions for active or "meaningful" citizenship in regional communities, which is the basis of a nonconformist type of civic behavior, characterized by a high level of responsible individual participation in public life and resolution of social problems in regional communities. Such citizenship is an "attribute of a citizen who has sovereign rights and freedoms, is socially competent and responsible in his/her civic engagement" (Lubsky, 2016, p.48).

Rational active citizenship relies on horizontal ties between different but equal social partners, ensuring civic solidarity practices in regional communities (Kovalev et al., 2018). Such civic practices are formed in contemporary Russia, relying, on the one hand, on social and cultural traditions of service to people and society, and on the other hand – on social and cultural innovations associated with the formation of civil society from below. However, rational active citizenship at a low level, in regional communities in the south of Russia has not yet been properly developed, particularly among young people, although young people are more actively involved in civic initiatives, managed both by socially oriented non-commercial organizations and public authorities in the context of development of civic society from above, as compared to other social groups (Lubsky, 2018).

Researchers often relate reasons which hinder development of local civic engagement to the presence of such negative phenomena in society as "distrust and misunderstanding of others, bureaucracy and paperwork, lack of support from the state, as well as indifference, indifference and inaction of most people" (Savel'yeva, 2013, p.27). Low level of civic engagement in regional communities is also determined by the presence of excessive social inequalities. In this regard, researchers point out that "social inequalities create a climate of confrontation and intolerance, prevent the achievement of national consent, giving rise to a severe estrangement between society and public authorities, perceived by the "lower social classes" as a means of protection of the interests of the rich and prosperous" (Gorshkov, 2010, p.46).

In our opinion, current excessive social inequalities and estrangement between society and the authorities are not the only factors that prevent the development of civic engagement in regional communities in the south of Russia. The social concern of the majority of the population, involving searches for ways and means of achievement of the acceptable standard of living, and, as a result, the lack of time for participation in civic initiatives, is highly important here as well. Civic participation is hindered by the trend towards individualization which has been recently growing in a climate of social overwork overstrain of Russia; it forms the people's perception according to which they have to rely on solely on themselves and their relatives in the resolution of everyday problems.

In addition, the etatist and paternalistic structures of mental programs exert influence on the low level of civic engagement in regional communities, which people do not reflect on, but which are constantly manifested in routine (ordinary) everyday practices. These structures, within which the state is considered as the core of the entire public life and its creator, and social guardianship is considered as a social duty of public authorities (Lubsky et al., 2016), are a significant obstacle for civic engagement in regional communities at the mental level. Moreover, clan and ethnic mentality also hinders civic engagement in multi-ethnic regions of the South of Russia in the context of underdevelopment of civic society institutions (Volkov et al., 2018).

One of the reasons of the low level of civic engagement in regional communities also lies in social inertia and civic apathy, generated not only by etatist and paternalistic traditions in Russian society organized by the state, but also by the fact that, first, the majority of the population has no belief in the effectiveness of joint civic activity; second, regional communities are lacking social trust,

since people, for the most part, trust only their immediate environment.

Conclusions

The cognitive component of mental programs, including knowledge of rights and duties of a citizen in society and the state, is more pronounced in the perceptions of citizenship that have developed in regional communities in the south of Russia. Position No. 2 is held by the value component of citizenship, which orients citizens to fulfill moral duties to the state and society, to respect the rights and freedoms of other citizens. As for the conative (behavioral) aspect of citizenship, it has not yet formed in the majority of the population in regional communities in the south of Russia. This causes the low level of civic engagement associated with the ability of citizens to assume responsibility for the situation in regional communities, exhibition of competent and responsible individual initiative aimed at resolution of social problems in modern solidarity practices.

Low level of civic engagement in regional communities in the south of Russia is caused by various reasons: first, etatist and paternalistic structures of mental programs and special aspects of clan and ethnic mentality; second, excessive social inequalities, lack of social trust, social distance between citizens, and lack of their willingness to participate in joint resolution of social problems at the local level; third, individualization of mass consciousness, lack of belief in the social effectiveness of civic solidarity practices; fourth, lack of trust in public authorities and stable perceptions of the population according to which it is impossible to exert influence on social situation and the policymaking process; fifth, underdevelopment of institutional environment for civic participation in resolution of social problems in regional communities, imperfection of regulations and standards regulating the involvement of citizens in the resolution of local issues; sixth, focus of a large part of the population on issues related to the search for the means of achievement of the acceptable standard of living.

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