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Social capital as a developmental basis of public work in Russia

Abstract

Authorities have recently become a stable trend in the direction of the discourse related to the development of civic engagement and the need to enhance capacity of local communities to ensure sustainable development of society. The purpose of this work is to study opportunities of creation of a social capital market and of a development of an effective mechanism for converting of a social capital on the basis of four social activity development clusters. On the basis of results of research on the social capital market the problem is revealed – it is the process of dialogue with local and public authorities, whose decision allows eliminating a dam that stops social activity and effective social work. The principle of objectivity became the main methodological base of scientific research. Application of a comparative-historical method helped to reveal the general and specific issues related to the development of social works.

Keywords: social capital, society, social practitioners.

JEL CODE: I38.

Kapitał społeczny jako podstawa rozwoju działalności publicznej w Rosji

Abstrakt

W ostatnim czasie wśród ekspertów, działacze państwowi i publiczni stali się popularnym tematem dyskusji związanych z rozwojem aktywności społecznej i koniecznością aktywizacji potencjału lokalnych społeczności w celu zagwarantowania stabilnego rozwoju społeczeństwa. Celem niniejszego artykułu jest zbadanie możliwości stworzenia rynku kapitału społecznego oraz stworzenia efektywnego mechanizmu konwersji kapitału społecznego na bazie czterech klastrów rozwoju aktywności społecznej. Na podstawie analiz rynku kapitału społecznego zidentyfikowano problem – jest nim proces dialogu z lokalnymi i centralnymi organami władzy. Rozwiązanie tego problemu pozwoli zniszczyć zapórę, która powstrzymuje aktywność obywatelską i realizację efektywnych praktyk społecznych. Podstawowym metodologicznym fundamentem niniejszego badania jest zasada obiektywizmu. Wykorzystana metoda porównawczo-historyczna pomogła zidentyfikować ogólne i specyficzne cechy rozwoju

praktyk społecznych. Przy analizie materiału celowe okazało się również wykorzystanie podejścia systemowego skoncentrowanego na ogółu podmiotów.

Słowa kluczowe: kapitał społeczny, społeczeństwo, praktyki społeczne.

Introduction

The meaning of social capital is central for sociological and economic sciences as a theoretical concept and as a subject of empirical researches. The study of the nature and functions of social and economic approaches leads to expansion of theoretical concept of social capital framework range, differentiation and specialization of empirical studies of the social phenomenon, the formation of different, often-conflicting interpretations of this phenomenon.

The aim of article is: analysis of the problem of dialogue non-governmental organizations with the state authorities. Proper construction of dialogue helps to activate civil activity and effective social practices that will contribute to the formation of democratic society. The study found that an effective mechanism for the conversion of social capital is based on four clusters of social activity development. The largest contribution to the development of the topic was made by many American scientists (G. Lourie, Dzh. Koulmenom, R. Patnemom), as well as by the concept of Fukuyama, the cultural capital of Bourdieu and works of such foreign sociologists as Anthony Giddens, R. Rouza, M. Granovetter.

The purpose of this article is to reveal possibilities for creating conditions for the development of social capital in the relations of society and the state. The main methodological basis of scientific studies on social capital is a principle of objectivity. In article method of statistical comparison was used.

Literature review

Social capital is the foundation of mutual trust and support, built in such interpersonal relations as a commitment and trust, social networks and news channels. Social capital allows mobilizing the resources of public relations that is nucleus for the state and interstate organizations.

Recently, Russian social sciences are becoming particularly urgent problems of the social capital productivity. We should note that, first of all, the lead comes from multiple, that social capital is the main resource in building relations between society and the state. The objective of the last actions was to increase civil activity of the population. Authorities have recently

become a stable trend in the direction of the discourse related to the development of civic engagement and the need to enhance capacity of local communities to ensure sustainable development of society. It is important that the person has not been closed in the usual system of economic relations and became an active participant of a public life. This circumstance is the most important condition for maintaining the balance in the state-business-society relationship.

Analysis of successful social practices, which are already being implemented in different cities of the Russian Federation, shows the presence of a wide variety of projects, each of which is able to make life more comfortable and safe (Pedagogicheskoe obozrenie, 2015). However, society is very poorly incorporated into the system of the civil activity of the population: the authorities do not always provide adequate support, and sometimes can not provide it due to the imperfection of the legal framework (Federalnyi zakon ot 12.01.1996 N 7-FZ). The reason of the social inertion is lack of formed culture of civic engagement or lack of necessary values and knowledge. In the traditional sense, motivation of people to public life does not always look as the motivation but an „inner need of the individual”, which does not need rewards and promotions. Neither the plane of the material (as business) nor the plane of the imperative (as a power) is the essence of this issue. It should be noted that the essence of the problem is related to the category of „social capital”. The sources of this idea can be found in the works of A. Tocqueville (2008), G. Simmel (2002).

French explorer P. Bourdieu says that the capital of the society can be material assets, coercion opportunities or other resources that simply fall out of the purview of the usual economic logic. In his view, social capital is a set of real or potential resources associated with the possession of a stable network (durable networks), more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition. (Bourdieu, p. 66) As the author points out social capital is a product of social production, material and, thereby, class practices, the means of achieving group solidarity (Bourdieu 1983, p. 185).

J. Coleman in his „Social capital in the creation of human capital” develops the idea of social capital as a resource for action that is one of the ways of administering social structure in a rational paradigm of action: „Unlike other forms of capital, social capital is an inherent structure of relations between actors among them. It does not depend on the actors themselves, nor depends on the means of production” (Coleman 1988). Especially the author identifies three forms of social capital: the obligations and expectations, information channels and social norms. The idea of J. Coleman was subsequently continued by an American

sociologist F. Fukuyama, who addresses the study of social capital to such categories as trust: „Social capital is the opportunity that arises from the presence of trust in the society” (Fukuyama 1995).

The opinion of the American sociologist M. Granovetter is also important in the study of social capital. In his view, modern society is permeated by networks of social relations between individuals. The author distinguishes two types of social relationships inherent in social networks: the first type consists of united family members, relatives (strong ties) and the second type includes bringing together friends, acquaintances (weak ties) (Granovetter 1973, p. 1366). According to the author, social capital is the product of the individual's involvement in the social structure.

The list of capitals one can also add human capital, which consists of knowledge, skills, individual skills. Nowadays all of the economists accept the fact that skills and knowledge of a single person are as much important for the production of goods as tools and machines. It is, apparently, a good time to focus on a social capital. Despite the difference in definitions of sociological theories, the basic parameters that determine the social capital can be identified quite specifically: trust, support, credibility, reputation and respect for resources that reduce the „transaction” costs in the implementation of any commercial, public and social projects.

Any capital can operate only if it can be „exchanged” for other types of capital. From the business point of view, economic value of social capital means that it reduces the cost of coordination of joint activities, replacing contracts, formal rules and bureaucratic procedures. Moreover, if relationships are based on trust, it is easier to learn the professional standards, ethics of communication by informal norms, which are transmitted by cultural traditions and education. To strengthen a way of overcoming the latent crisis of legitimacy, increasing absenteeism, an efficient mechanism of policies support is required. However, the main constraint impeding the development of civil activity, is the lack of an effective mechanism for the conversion of social capital.

The hypothesis of research

Trust, under certain conditions, may cease to be an individual quality and spread to a social group or society.

The results of scientific research

To study the social capital aim it is important to refer to empirical-sociological materials presented in the studies (Socio-cultural dynamics a portrait of the Tyumen region 2015). Based on the work of the group of Tyumen's scientists, one has identified the level of confidence in the authorities. The manifestation of high confidence on the social level – a recognition and prestige as government institutions and non-governmental organizations, the belief that people act in accordance with social needs and goals. A certain level of confidence in many respects determines the acceptance and support of the population of the selected political and socio-economic policy. It is also an important factor in triggering innovative activity that determines the effectiveness of the implementation of adopted decisions of the authorities. The objective of the study is to define the level of trust/distrust to regional authorities and to find points of tensions and contradictions of the social space in the region.

After some sociological observations we found negative attitudes regarding many governmental bodies in Tyumen region. So trust and confidence estimations show that the proportion of „not trust” among almost all social structures outweighs the „trust”. The only exceptions are courts, the governor, and, in 2013, the prosecutor's office. The structure of the trust / distrust in the institutions of power was investigated for the years 2006-2013 and has a similar configuration. However, some certain dynamic shifts were found. The greatest confidence in the population of the Tyumen region had courts and the governor (44% and 35% of the population accordingly), but 25% of the population do not trust these institutions (Table 1).

Table 1. The level of confidence in the Tyumen region to regional institutions of power of the population in 2006-2013% of respondents

		The court	The Governor	The unions	The Prosecutor's office	Police	The government of the region	Lawmaker	Media	Municipal authorities
Trust	2006	43	43	25	29	20	28	18	28	
	2009	28	43	25	28	21	33	24	25	
	2011	34	31	20	27	22	26	24	27	25
	2013	44	35	25	36	29	29	23	228	28
Hard to say for sure	2006	25	30	35	31	26	30	36	24	
	2009	18	23	25	22	21	26	28	22	
	2011	22	27	28	25	24	29	30	27	27
	2013	20	29	29	25	23	28	30	23	30
Don't trust	2006	28	24	35	35	50	37	40	43	
	2009	27	23	28	30	40	28	30	40	
	2011	25	22	27	28	36	24	32	26	27
	2013	25	25	29	27	37	29	22	38	30
Don't know no answer	2006	4	4	6	5	5	5	6	5	
	2009	18	12	22	20	17	12	19	14	
	2011	18	20	25	20	18	22	24	21	21
	2013	11	11	13	12	11	14	16	10	13

Source: The socio-cultural dynamics – a portrait of the Tyumen area: the collective monograph, 2015. p. 276.

Studies show that the ratings of „trust” and „confidence” in the Tyumen region are stable enough. It was revealed that by 2013, comparing to 2006, the level of trust has increased and the level of confidence in the institutions of law and order has been reduced. This is especially noticeable in the attitudes towards the police. More and more people become distrustful of the police (50%), and the confidence level is about 20% (this is the highest position in the ranking of distrust of different social institutions and almost the lowest rank of trust). The level of distrust to militia/police (37%) is decreased and a slight increase in the level of trust (29%) was detected.

As a positive factor one mention the increase of the level of public confidence in the police and the prosecutor's office. For the first few years of observations in relation to the Prosecutor's assessment of „trust” and „rather trust” prevail over the negative assessments.

Answering to the question: „Do you trust the prosecutor's office?” from 27% to 36% of respondents expressed their trust. On the other hand, the share of "trust" to the police increased slightly (37%).

„Distrust” – is a factor of tension and potential conflict in society. High level of confidence may well serve as an obstacle in implementing a project of economic modernization. In addition, in the Tyumen region low institutional trust indicators were combined with a high potential for protest. Thus, the willingness to participate in a protests was expressed by (35%) of the respondents.

Table 2. The level of public trust in the south part of the Tyumen Region, Khanty-Mansiysk District and Yamalo-Nenets District to regional institutions of power (2006, 2009, 2011 and 2013% of the number of simplification by subregions)

		South of the Tyumen region				Khanty manskiysky autonomous area				Yamalo Nenetskiy autonomous area			
		2006	2009	2011	2013	2006	2009	2011	2013	2006	2009	2011	2013
Court	trust	43	41	37	45	42	34	32	44	42	43	34	42
	don't trust	28	31	24	27	29	23	27	23	28	26	24	23
Governor	trust	42	43	33	34	46	40	29	24	38	45	32	38
	don't trust	24	11	20	27	29	20	24	24	29	23	22	20
Labor union	trust	23	31	21	24	27	23	19	28	25	21	20	20
	don't trust	35	30	24	32	35	25	27	26	35	30	32	32
Prosecutor's office	trust	30	31	29	38	29	25	26	35	29	31	26	35
	don't trust	35	36	25	29	32	25	30	26	37	28	31	26
Police	trust	18	24	23	28	22	19	21	29	20	24	21	30
	don't trust	53	46	34	41	45	35	37	33	51	40	38	34
Government of the region	trust	29	35	27	30	28	30	24	29	24	36	27	32
	don't trust	38	32	21	31	34	26	25	28	42	28	28	25
Political parties	trust	12	21	16	13	14	22	17	17	13	19	17	13
	don't trust	45	37	23	47	46	29	31	40	48	41	31	43
Law. Duma of the region.	trust	19	26	26	22	17	23	24	25	19	24	25	23
	don't	39	23	19	34	39	25	24	31	42	32	23	30

	trust												
Mass media	trust	27	29	27	28	27	23	26	30	30	22	27	27
	don't trust	45	39	23	42	43	38	27	33	42	46	29	43
Municipal to governing bodies	trust	-	-	25	27	-	-	24	28	-	-	27	27
	don't trust	-	-	24	32	-	-	29	28	-	-	31	29

Note: "I trust" = answers "I trust completely " + "perhaps I trust" "I do not trust" = answers "I do not really trust" + "I do not trust at all".

Source: Sociocultural dynamics – a portrait of the Tyumen region: collective monograph, 2015. p. 276

As mentioned above, the main restrictive factor preventing the development of the citizen activism is a lack of efficient mechanism of social capital conversion. It also should be noticed that, in the Russian Federation, some researches on development of such mechanisms are being conducted and it may be distributed in accordance with four main clusters. The first cluster is a socially oriented non-profitable organizations (NGO) existing in the Russian Federation. It includes stimulation of non-profitable organizations (NGO) that work on government procurements and act in socially significant fields approved by the government in the law on non-profitable organizations. The cluster problems are obstructed by its multipurposeness and result in narrowing the specialization, including the corrupted stimulation system and „clumsiness” of state authorities.

The second cluster is represented by groundfunding systems. They are rapidly developing electronic platforms aimed on fundraising from citizens for various social initiatives. With this, the citizens obtain the right to choose projects and types of stimulation; and that means that the main source of social capital – people – are involved in the process of social project implementation. However such systems do not ensure motivation itself, since they do not offer the donors anything else besides their personal satisfaction. The problem can be solved to a certain degree by using commercial crowdfunding experience where the initiator invents different ways to reward „investors”.

The third cluster is represented by a number of „tripartism” technologies. In most cases the authorities stimulate business to participate in socially effective activities. At the moment, however, the regulatory system almost excludes such privileges to commercial enterprises (which were also revoked), so the only thing is to use international experience. Business in this context gets different preferences – from tax remissions to top-priority level in obtaining governmental procurements. In Russia nowadays, such technologies are still not well-developed and it is difficult yet to expect them to be wide spread in the nearest future.

The fourth cluster is social and local currencies. There are reasons to believe that it is an upward trend, which is demonstrated by numerous successful projects implemented around the world. The idea is to provide an alternative means of exchanging goods and services (extra money), which is, on one hand, devoid of generic diseases typical for „large” monetary systems – percents, redistribution of capital, the possibility of accumulation and rent-seeking not from labor but from the money itself, and, on the other hand, has mechanisms that direct the specific problems of local communities (promotion of socially responsible consumption, development of the local economy, overcoming unemployment, and so on) to proper institutions.

All these clusters are specific elements of „mosaic”, which could start working as a single mechanism only if all the elements are connected together. An effective mechanism of the conversion of social capital should include as related elements: state support for socially-oriented NGOs, national financing mechanisms and promotion of socially responsible business conduct. And the universality of the conversion (as well as the motivation to participate in projects relevant to local communities) in this mechanism could be ensured by introduction of an unified social currency allowing an exchange of socially significant actions for the good of an individual or a group.

Among the factors significant contribution to the development of such systems the wide development of social networks should be mentioned. They create definite context able to ease interaction between people as well as to ensure the government understanding of the need of support for public institutions socially significant activities which, in case of a high efficiency, may cost cheaper than similar governmental mechanisms. Separately, almost all parts of the system are already developed and successfully implemented in different cities of Russia. For example, „Bank Vremeni” in Voronezh, „100 friends” system in Irkutsk, „Saratov Idea” platform, etc.

In Tyumen region a social project called a „neighborhood festival” is implemented. -This project includes work with urban communities and communities of residents. Its aim is to create sustainable neighborhood communities, to accumulate social capital and to develop a favorable social environment. Such work may be the new competitive advantage of the development projects and cities in the region and the country as a whole. Thus, it is possible to emphasize that the development of social capital takes place within the framework of social networks, under the influence of different levels of factors.

After analyzing of the possibilities to create a social capital market, it was found out that there is a broad range of uncovered problems requiring collective discussion and making joint decisions from the side of the active part of local communities. First of all, it is „the problem of price” – which means to make a sort of a public contract that could form all participants’ common understanding of how valuable the socially significant actions are, to what, how and according to which criteria they should be referred. Secondly, in spite of the fact that modern Internet platforms suggest turnkey solutions for separate forms mentioned above, there is still no user-friendly platform which could integrate social currency market, crowd-funding system, as well as government and commercial procurement for socially significant actions. Thirdly, long and, probably, complicated dialogue between local and state authorities who used to solve social problems in traditional way is needed. Solving these problems will result in reaching activation of citizens and implementing efficient social practices.

Conclusions

The present article considers the problem of the development of effective dialogue between public organizations and state authorities. In this context, a phenomenon of „social capital” is discussed and regarded as a basis of a mutual trust that contributes to social relations resources mobilization, which is essential in the development of interrelations between the society and the state in Russia. With a view to explore the demonstrations of social capital the article analyses the empiric-sociological material represented in the Tyumen State University scientists’ study. The material learned shows a stable „trust” and „distrust” ratings in the region that confirms the local community is, for a certain extent, ready for a dialogue with state authorities.

The research made it clear that the efficient mechanism of social capital conversion consists of four clusters of social activity development which have also been thoroughly analyzed. The defined clusters, if integrated properly, can become a basis for social activity efficient development in the Russian Federation. The authors formulate essential problems of social capital market development which becomes necessary in order to achieve a certain degree of citizen activism as well as social practices successful implementation. The presented research may become a fundamental for further investigation of social capital as a basis of social life development both in Russia and worldwide. Hence, the investigation of social capital as a basis for social activity development in Russia gives larger space for further research and theoretical thinking.

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