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Prospects of the civil society development in post-socialist conditions

Syryamkina Evgeniya Vladimirovna^{*}, Stupnikova Olga Borisovna

Tomsk Polytechnic University, 30 Lenin Avenue, Tomsk, 634050, Russia

Abstract

This study is directed to the analysis of contradictions and development prospects of that social reality in which civil society characteristics become apparent. Discourse about civil society in post-socialism is extremely polarized. Civil society is represented both as «rescue» and as colonial policy of Western countries. In general, the research of a civil society should take into consideration informal practices that are considered to be central both in state socialism and in post-socialism. Individualism principle and «open» society, consisting of individuals, that are connected not only by formal relationships should give place to «community of communities» principle. This creates the necessity to transform the system of values that determine economic behavior of individuals into the development of corporatism and collectivism. This paper stresses the significance of presence in a society of individually-psychological and morally-ethical factors that make possible the functioning of network-based information society in post-socialism conditions.

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1. Introduction

Fast moving social dynamics of our times leads to mass transformation of personal values. There arises a demand in a new vocabulary that is capable to deduce these transformations, to show social and cultural narratives that constitute people's life. The investigation in this paper is directed to the analysis of contradictions and prospects of social reality development, in which specific features of a civil society are detected: the concepts of power separation, economic freedom, authority and self-government electivity, law supremacy, autonomy of privacy.

It is necessary to remember that specified features (typological features in other words) are merely the results of theoretic generalization, as civil society models (in contemporary or classic variants) do no base on empiric entity but they were created as models, as alternatives of prognostic society development.

^{*} Syryamkina E. V. Tel.: +79539229753
E-mail address: evsyr@tpu.ru

There arises an intellectual problem: What type of society can be constructed? This is because the historical implementation of civil society invariant foundations is considerably determined with specific features of socio-political formation within it is embodied.

2. Contradictions in social reality model

According to outstanding American sociologist I. Wallerstein, the social world entered the «global transformation» process. I. Wallerstein describes this period negatively. He says about severe struggle for future where the main problem is a dilemma whether a new historical system will save the model of the existing and former systems, or it will be relatively democratic, relatively egalitarian. We can see at once that this is the moral problem: «What is a good society?» (Wallerstein, I., 2001).

Thus, this modern society transformation has blurred prospective and misty consequences. That is why the correspondent category, in which a new society is going to be constructed, is constantly changing, and it could not be clearly defined. But it doesn't mean that it does not exist or, moreover, that it is impossible.

Using the definition of «information society», the British researcher Z. Bauman (Bauman, Z., 2002) describes, in our opinion, the alternative situation in the individualized society. According to his point of view, such society is characterized by three significant peculiarities: a man is losing control over important social processes; therefore there arises uncertainty and there strengthens insecurity of a man faced with uncontrolled changes; and in similar conditions it would be a logical desire of a man to back away from perspective targets for getting immediate certain result. That is why describing the world of the early XXI century it is required to mention rash complicacy of economic and political reality on the one hand, and more evident fragmentarity, eclecticity of human existence on the other hand. Z. Bauman places emphasis on that fact that the contemporary model of this social reality is highly contradictory, as «individualized society» has been formed not due to the aspiration of an individuum, but due to the depersonified objective tendencies. In other words, what is nowadays called «information society» is an objective external fact towards a man.

The discourse about civil society in post-socialism is extremely polarized. Civil society is represented both as a «rescue» and as the colonial policy of Western countries.

Civil society as a «rescue», as progressive power protects from state arbitrariness and assists democracy development. West funds, promoted civil society projects, supposed that they change simple people conviction and create vital background for democracy. Such possibilities of global civil societal influence inspired researchers and that is why they refer to it optimistically. Civil society can also be represented as «medicine» for post-social countries (Sampson, S., 2002).

Anthropologist Steven Sampson considers, the position of colonization originates from the opinion that transformation of the civil society idea and west style democracy to post-social countries is a form of «benevolent colonialism» (Hann, C., 2002), as West countries aimed to provide stability and security and «to educate» post-social countries by promoting their own opinion about «good society».

However, more than twenty years of foreign help to public sphere organizations have not brought the expected results. Development analysis of civil societies in post-social societies is disappointing: comparing with the West the post-social civil society is much weaker and it does not correspond to the prominent expectancies at the cusp of 1980-90 years (Kocka, J., 2003).

That is why civil society frequently appears as an extraneous model that is copied in post-social countries without paying attention to own history and traditions. But it remains unnoticed that transferring West civil society model all social and institutional features will also be transferred (Hann, C., 2002). From the colonization viewpoint regulatory measurement of the civil society presents difficulties, as this society is simulated as broad-based concept that can be transferred from one place to another without any difficulties as a matter of course.

Both «rescue» position and colonialism suggest too simple understanding of a civil society. Dilemma «good/bad» does not reflect contemporary multifaceted reality of post-social countries.

3. Communitarist model of social reality

Anthropologist Chris Hann believes that civil society model should be correlated and adapted to local conditions, thus expanding its definition. The same opinion is expressed by Jürgen Kocka, German scientist. He considers that in the east of the continent they inspired with west ideas, but what they have taken is not a simple imitation but a selective assimilation in their own conditions (Kocka J, 2003).

In this case the civil society will become a useful general definition which means and enables a great deal of practices between state and private lives. C. Hann criticizes the idea that civil society is strictly limited by individuality concepts of west liberalism. Civil society research, in his opinion, should take into consideration informal practices that are central both in state socialism and post socialism.

Communitarianism is another methodological orientation in terms of which adequate attempts to contemporary social realities concept are created.

Communitarianism position is close to conservative one in the theory of public morality erosion, but it is close to liberal position in the idea of keeping the state out of moral questions. But if the liberals oppose any kinds of social benefits, then the communitarists are sure that society can and should be based upon universally recognized values determined by the society but not by the state. The communitarists called such society as a «good society» (Sandel M., 1982; MacIntyre A., 1981; Taylor Ch., 2001; Etzioni A., 1999; Walzer M., 1995).

Let us examine an example of communitarian utopia expressed by Amitai Etzioni - one of the best known representative of communitarianism in the USA. In his book «Active society» he expresses the opinion that the world is in the «postmodern» period, the formation of which happened after the World War II. Postmodern epoch is characterized by the resolute transformation of information, scientific and energy technologies and it also influences on civil society (Etzioni, A., 1999).

But stable technologies development, on the other side, is problematic, it makes to forget the importance of values. In microsociologic analysis A. Etzioni states that in postmodern period there is a great risk of the existence of these values created by technological transformation or the advantages of values are proved out.

Thus, according to A. Etzioni «post-modernity» as a historical period or as a society type is not a definition but the question: what alternative will prevail, and what role is prepared for society, and if it will be a «servant» or a «master».

4. «Community of communities» as civil society model development

«Post-modernity» suggests the realization of the fact that «after a moment the movement to freedom does not bring positive results to the society. Nowadays, Western countries and the USA face with the problems of consolidation of collective values and fixation of new limits for individualism (Etzioni A., 1995).

In these conditions the society is possible only on the basis of justice, and this means the coordination of social order with moral values of society members. But how this could be realized in the absence of ideology or religion is not clear.

So it should be admitted that there occurred a historically precedent situation, when libertarian social order is impossible, but traditional measures of communitarianism do not correspond.

Thinking about changes, Etzioni suggests to start with strengthening of ethical principles ignoring any accusation in «moral compulsion» and «precisianism» (Etzioni A., 2004).

Etzioni describes his model of social justice in the following way. First of all, he believes, all people should try to solve their problems themselves. Friends, relatives, neighbors are the next level of social security; this is a community, that can be formed by close people. The final level of security is the whole society in the meaning of «community of communities», that helps the members whose abilities to help themselves are limited. Each community should make all efforts to solve these problems.

Etzioni believes that if in 1980s egocentrism was made as a point of virtue, but now there is a shift to «we» epoch, to «collectivism». He considers that fair society has a precise balance between private autonomy and public order, and it is based not so much on enforcement as on convictions (Etzioni A., 2004).

There exist several factors influencing on the development of communitarian features in social formations that appear due to informatization processes. The first one is a technological factor. An important feature of the contemporary world's organization is the increase of network interaction structures. Network organization of economic processes provides more their efficiency. Industrial fragments of global economic structure continue to exist only due to technologies that require the concentration of productive forces in a unitary spatiotemporal continuum. During the development technical tools in network connection will be spread faster and they will create conditions for technological development based on the utilization of spread resources.

One can admit that with the development of network structures the world would not be analogous to the Brownian agitation, as in such structures the principles of individualism are hardly permitted. All these determine the specificity of cultural and political character of the new environment. Individualism principle and «open» society consisting of individuals should yield to «community of communities» principle. It is necessary for the transformation of the system of values which determine economic behavior of individuals into the development of corporatism and collectivism.

In the system of values the niche of unlimited private property accumulation should take the principle of supporting the productive life for all «community of communities» members that means the shift of emphasis to collective social security and safety principle. That is why while forming communities in information society there will be a need in the development of social functions of each production corporate entity. In return, corporate principles considered to be effective when they are combined with the idea of social equity that supposes help to each community member. Only then he can entirely use his skills, play correspondent social role, self-actualize in this, feel himself necessary to the society and get society's support.

Starting with the family and finishing with a large corporation, at all levels of community members should be combined by general interests, traditions, informal connections. People relations should be protected from formal profit criterion and this will allow keeping a diversity in the community and in the society in general. This is determined by the necessary presence of individually-psychological and morally-ethical factors in a society that make possible the functioning of network-based information society.

«Community of communities», where the group «egoism» prevails, quickly grows into the community of clan and mafia formations (organisations). There arise constant intergroup conflicts, and significantly conflicts between an individual and a society. In information and technology medium such society grows into the hostage of each individual, and even today it can be seen in increscent terrorism threat and cybercrime. Refusal from group egoism can be provided by the survival in contemporary conditions of such a «community of communities».

Forms of communitarian self-consciousness developed in pre-industrial and industrial age compose a valuable resource for realization of such refusal, but they should be fundamentally changed. Could the value systems existing in contemporary culture provide the development of network information society or we face a historical need of new fundamentals of man's virtue, new ways of his axiological self-determination?

5. Conclusion

The uncertainty in retention of position, deficiency of effective social welfare system, the atmosphere of total danger – are the realities of day-to-day life of an average person in post-social countries. It is said about the loss of trust, lack of fit, about rushing society desolidation. This permits to deny the right to call the contemporary society as a «good society».

Modern academic philosophy can provide means of disagreement detecting and expressing, but it gives no guidance how to overcome them. All that remains to a modern man is to use those resources that he gets in

everyday group life, whose spiritual and practical history has led to the elaboration of certain society models on the justice and rationality basis.

The definition of «good» society differs from the definition of «civil» society as the last contains the recognition of all voluntary associations directed to the society consolidation and to mutual understanding, but «good» society supports specific societal concepts of welfare. That is why different communities are evaluated in a good society in the context of how they work toward social welfare concept realization.

In this paper the argumentation of community value as a space where human virtues form gives the opportunity to state that societal life quality should be the subject of public discussion. This means that there is a need to refuse from the fairness doctrine, the neutrality while discussing the problems of collective living and recognizing the significance and the value of certain virtues in building solidary society.

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