

ISCKMC 2020**International Scientific Congress «KNOWLEDGE, MAN AND CIVILIZATION»****KEY INDICATORS OF DEVELOPMENT OF CIVIL-SOCIETY
INSTITUTIONS IN RUSSIA**

Alexey Dmitriev (a)*, Irina Eroshenko (b), Julia Nizovtseva (c), Evgeniy Nikolaev (d),
Arkadiy Dolgov (e), Ivan Tamarov (f)

*Corresponding author

- (a) Territorial authority of the Federal state statistics service in the Volgograd region, 1, Volodarsky str., Volgograd, Russia, basement.dmitriev@gmail.com,
(b) Volgograd state technical university, 28, Lenin ave., Volgograd, Russia, iaeroshenko@mail.ru
(c) Volgograd state technical university, 28, Lenin ave., Volgograd, Russia, julia-myasoedova@mail.ru
(d) Volgograd state technical university, 28, Lenin ave., Volgograd, Russia, evg_nik_85@list.ru
(e) Volgograd state technical university, 28, Lenin ave., Volgograd, Russia, juliaxdolgova@gmail.com
(f) Volgograd state technical university, 28, Lenin ave., Volgograd, Russia, tamarowa.lara@yandex.ru

Abstract

The paper is concerned with some approaches to address the category of “civil society”. It evaluates possibilities to establish, develop and transplant civil-society institutions. The very category of civil society, being repeatedly interpreted by the great minds of mankind during its historical development, aside from failing to take a single form, also acquired a multitude of connotations. The described ambiguity was generated by the environment where researchers existed, their cultural background, hereditary characteristics, and others. Social environment is a complex arrangement that is formed based on the beliefs fostered by those who are in the lead. Moreover, this arrangement itself forms beliefs, imparting them to old (to a lesser extent) and new (to a greater extent) members of society. This algorithm figured out to support social mechanism determines cultural continuity, ensuring the continuity of social development. A developed civil society can significantly increase the efficiency of self-regulation, thereby reducing the burden on the current political power in the country. The institutions of civil society have a number of specific features that distinguish them from the norms regulating the relationship between individuals in other spheres of the socio-economic life of society. The methodology includes structural and statistical analysis, analysis of academic literature, including both periodicals and non-periodicals, as well as synthesis of the results obtained to develop an interdisciplinary approach to address the features that lie behind the development of civil-society institutions.

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Keywords: Civil society, neo-institutionalism, institutional traps, transplantation of institutions, non-profit organizations



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1. Introduction

Civil society is a complex and ambiguous category, whose content is occasionally fraught with contradictory and multidimensional implications. Its history has been lost in the depths of centuries, and now it is not possible to determine exactly who was the first to speak about civil society. Arguing logically, let us assume that thoughts associated with the need to form a friendly social environment based on mutual respect and trust of its members appeared simultaneously with society, otherwise known as a collection of people who want to take a worthy place in a world full of dangers and injustices. The presence of a civil society presupposes autonomy and self-sufficiency of the social environment, within which social groups and individuals jointly tackle significant challenges that in some other conditions demand intervention from the state.

2. Problem Statement

Many Russian authors have addressed this topic in the framework of monographs and dissertations. It is worth mentioning the publications of such domestic authors as Levada (2011), Polterovich (1999, 2016), Auzan (2005, 2015) and Inshakov (2010) that contain an objective assessment of possibilities to build a civil society in Russia, and fully reflect the tools for increasing the efficiency of this process. Besides this, a rapid transformation of the institutional, sociocultural, economic and political environment in the light of global economic transformations requires constant monitoring of the trends in the growth of civil-society institutions in Russia.

3. Research Questions

Civil society is a complex category that reflects a set of institutions regulating the relationship between individuals and social groups, as well as establishing certain rules of behavior, deviation from which will entail sanctions by other representatives of society. The study aims to respond to two crucial questions:

1. What is civil society, and what role do non-profit organizations play in the establishment of its institutions?
2. In what stage of development are the institutions of civil society in modern Russia, and what measures can have a beneficial effect on the process of their further improvement?

4. Purpose of the Study

The category of civil society is addressed by many socio-humanitarian disciplines, including sociology, philosophy, political science, economics and many others. However, an extensive theoretical base, developed over many centuries of consideration, often does not contain an analysis of empirical data confirming the stated hypotheses. The paper aims to theorize an empirical study of civil-society institutions evolving in Russia.

5. Research Methods

The methodology includes an analysis of academic literature on the research topic presented in various scientific and applied disciplines with an aim of further synthesizing its results and developing an interdisciplinary approach to characterizing the category of “civil society”. In addition, the work relies on statistical methods aimed at identifying current trends in the development of civil-society institutions in Russia, with non-profit organizations to be viewed as main conductors.

6. Findings

The first models of civil society date back to ancient times, being closely intertwined with current territories in which they were created, and sometimes took forms that today seem to be incorrect and cruel (we can recall the ideal state in Plato’s view as the most striking example). The slave-owning system, which reigned throughout the globe for many centuries, did not allow researchers to think differently than within the existing categories (Kovazhenkov, 2007). It all changed with the onset of the Renaissance, when the writings of philosophers and scientists began to be characterized by greater freedom of interpretation (Dmitriev, 2019). The institutional (and later – neoinstitutional) theory made it possible to shape the most complete idea of civil society, describing it as a set of interrelated institutions. Based on the fundamental work of North (1997), the categories “institution” and “organization” should be distinguished.

Thus, an institution is a fixed norm (formal or informal) that is actively used in a particular social environment. An organization can choose patterns of behavior that are optimal for specific institutions, or that contradict them – this is determined by comparing the level of risk imposed by sanctions with positive changes that promise a favorable outcome. As an example, let us consider a situation when a group of employees of an enterprise address to the CEO with a complaint against the head of a structural unit, saying that he deliberately does not provide subordinates with the necessary information, and therefore work efficiency decreases and employees do not receive deserved benefits (Malkina, 2011). In this regard, we can view the current state of affairs as an informal institution (or, rather, as an institutional trap) – a unit functions in such conditions, and deviations from the general course are threatened with sanctions from the head (David, 1985).

Institutions for the most part can be transplanted (i.e. borrowed) from the experience of more developed countries – this process bridges a development gap in relatively short periods of time if an underdeveloped state is the recipient of the transplant process (Arthur, 1994). The process of transplantation of socio-economic institutions is always characterized by a risk of rejection of the borrowed norms by the institutional environment of a recipient country. In such situations, the institution either does not function at all or does not function as envisaged.

Transplantation of civil-society institutions is particularly challenging, since within a single country, civil-society institutions should be correlated with the signs of historical development of the state, as well as the prevailing sociocultural paradigm. With this in view, the most optimal direction for improving institutions of civil society is to promote existing institutions by involving new actors. This process can be implemented by non-profit organizations.

Non-profit organizations are business entities that do not strive to maximize recoverable profits, like commercial structures, but implement socially significant projects in the field of education, enlightenment, social assistance, health care, legal consulting and much more (Kosygina, 2018). Below are the tables that provide data on the number of persons who received the relevant services in the period 2013–2018.

Table 1. Demand for the services of socially oriented non-profit organizations, 2013–2015

Index	2013		2014		2015	
	number	% to 15	number	% to 16	number	% to 17
Total, thousand	27 103	97.3	37 134	137.0	37 701	101.5
Including those who received:						
social services	17 883	101.7	23 216	129.8	26 318	113.4
legal advice free of charge or concessional	1 659	104.4	5 067	3 times	3 120	61.6
charity support in kind	5 237	100.2	5 654	108.0	5 415	95.8
financial charity support	2 324	67.2	3 197	137.6	2 848	89.1

Source: compiled by the authors based on materials (22)

Table 1 indicates that the number of citizens who were provided various services by socially oriented non-profit organizations reached a peak in 2015 – mainly due to the number of people who were provided with social services. 2014 was characterized by a sharp increase in the number of people who received legal advice on a gratuitous or preferential basis. The general trend can be called an upward trend. However, in order to provide a more detailed description of the demand for the services provided by non-profit organizations, further periods should be considered. The data are reflected in Table 2.

Table 2. Demand for the services of socially oriented non-profit organizations, 2016–2018

Index	2016		2017		2018	
	number	% to 15	number	% to 16	number	% to 17
Total, thousand	41 383	109.8	53 430	129.1	72 087	134.9
Including those who received:						
social services	31 825	120.9	42 022	132.0	60 378	143.7
legal advice free of charge or concessional	2 292	73.5	2 813	122.7	2 874	102.2
charity support in kind	5 643	104.2	6 600	117.0	6 898	104.5
financial charity support	1 623	57.0	1 995	122.9	1 937	97.1

Source: compiled by the authors based on materials (22)

The data shown in Table 2 indicate a continuing growth in the demand for the services provided by non-profit organizations, whereas in 2016 the minimum number of citizens was recorded, who received financial charity support. Moreover, the number of citizens was still significantly growing in the provision of social services.

One of the main problems faced by non-profit organizations that perform their activities in Russia is the lack of financial resources. This is due to a number of factors, such as:

1. Restrictions imposed on non-profit organizations towards entrepreneurial and investment activities. Law No. 7-FZ On Non-Profit Organizations, which is the principal normative act regulating the

activities of non-profit organizations in Russia, provides for the possibility of entrepreneurial activities by organizations only in accordance with the nature of their main activities;

2. Law No. 121-FZ On Non-Profit Organizations, adopted in 2012, introduces additional restrictions on financial resources attracted from abroad: whereby, a non-profit organization can be assigned a status of “foreign agent”, which is characterized by insufficient flexibility and does not make a distinction between the types of activities carried out by non-profit organizations;

3. Lack of transparency in relations to arise in arranging calls for proposal to receive presidential grants. Research by Transparency International (23), conducted in 2017 and 2018, suggests that the decisions of the commission in the framework of grant proposals are biased. Thus, the largest amounts of money were received by non-profit organizations whose founders were somehow affiliated with government agencies;

4. Insufficient development of fundraising and crowdfunding institutions (although there is an obvious tendency to disseminate and promote these fundraising tools). Fundraising actually involves collecting donations from individuals and legal entities, which can be used to implement certain projects or to pay off the organization’s current obligations.

Table 3. The amount of donations attracted in the period 2013–2015

Index	2013		2014		2015	
	number	% to 12	number	% to 13	number	% to 14
Total non-profit organizations, units	113 237	257.3	132 087	116.6	140 031	106.0
Total amount of financing, RUR mln	516 422	124.7	648 504	125.6	686 861	105.9
including:						
donations	165 895	105.4	243 458	146.8	256 440	105.3
including from:						
non-profit organizations	28 067	37.2	35 778	127.5	34 257	95.7
commercial organizations	71 148	339.7	122 977	172.8	125 400	102.0
individuals	66 680	109.4	84 703	127.0	96 783	114.3

Source: compiled by the authors based on materials (22)

During the target period, there was a tendency towards an increase in the number of active non-profit organizations. The amount of donations attracted has also grown rapidly across almost all sources (with the exception of donations from other non-profit entities in 2013 and 2015, Table 03). At the same time, the total volume of financing of non-profit sector entities also increased, which, among other things, was associated with an increase in inflation at the turn of 2014 and 2015. Below is Table 2, where similar data are presented for the period 2016–2018 (Table 04).

Table 4. The amount of donations attracted in the period 2016–2018

Index	2016		2017		2018	
	number	% to 15	number	% to 16	number	% to 17
Total non-profit organizations	143 436	102.4	142 641	99.4	140 247	98.3
Total amount of financing, RUR mln	831 894	121.1	848 857	102.0	851 687	100.3
including:						
donations	385 646	150.4	407 323	105.6	373 752	91.8
including from:						

non-profit organizations	80 211	234.1	94 279	117.5	77 366	82.1
commercial organizations	174 102	138.8	199 612	114.7	175 828	88.1
individuals	131 333	135.7	113 432	86.4	120 558	106.3

Source: compiled by the authors based on materials (22)

A flashy growth in the number of socially oriented non-profit organizations, which began in 2012, reached its peak in 2016, followed by a decline. In turn, the total volume of funding for non-profit entities continues to increase, while the value of attracted donations reached its maximum in 2017.

5.Low involvement of the population in the activities of socially oriented non-profit organizations. Despite a positive dynamics, the number of volunteers attracted to implement various projects and tasks in the related sector still remains extremely low.

Based on international practice and achievements of various researchers, the following series of directions for the development of civil society institutions in Russia can be identified:

1.Fostering a sense of social responsibility in citizens, starting from school by holding massive public-spirited events. Volunteer teams organized under the umbrella of educational institutions to implement public activities in various areas. In the long term, this set of measures will not only foster a sense of social responsibility in new members of society, but also minimize a “free rider problem”;

2.Providing tax and property incentives for non-profit organizations as an alternative to providing more freedom of entrepreneurial activity. Today, a significant part of socially oriented non-profit organizations are endowed with property benefits at the expense of regional budgets. However, in the context of restrictions imposed on entrepreneurial activities of third sector entities, such benefits cannot be considered as a sufficient condition for maintaining and promoting the development of an organization (Dmitriev & Evstratov, 2019).

3.Expansion of fundraising channels and active use of crowdfunding platforms to attract financial resources from both individuals and legal entities. Fundraising and crowdfunding today have gained significant popularity in Europe and the West, but in Russia they have not yet earned widespread recognition as development tools (while there is an open question about the advisability of using such tools in conditions of insufficient real incomes of the population).

7. Conclusion

Thus, having considered the peculiarities of the establishment and development of civil-society institutions in Russia, it was found that the modern system of institutions is characterized by low efficiency. There are a number of upward trends, though, particularly concerning the number of volunteers and the volume of voluntary monetary and property donations from individuals and legal entities. To maintain a stable social system, various regulatory mechanisms are used based on the effects of coordination, conjugation and cultural inertia, which leads to a feedback determining the effectiveness of civil-society institutions. However, the fact is that such mechanisms do not work at full capacity due to the lack of incentives that ensure the attraction of new actors and minimize the number of deviations from the norm. The non-profit sector of the Russian economy has a long way to go before its effectiveness can be compared with that of developed countries.

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