


TERRITORIAL COMMUNITIES' CONSOLIDATION ROUTE

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INTRODUCTION

One of the reasons for structuring a society is the separation within it of territorial communities, which are groups of people located within a limited geopolitical space and therefore have objectively determined common interests. Territorial communities can be formed at various levels, ranging from micro- (neighbourhood communities, residents of rural settlements) to meso- (regional population) and macro-social (total nation). The presence of interests objectively determined by living conditions, traditions, and the specific nature of the social situation in question does not automatically Valentin P. Babintsev; Galina N. Gaidukova; Zhanna A. Shapoval transform the territorial community into integrity, nor does it give it a systemic character. And, in fact, applying this concept

as equivalent to the concept of "population of territory", we refer only to the possibility of self-organization and, as a consequence, to the prospect of this population acquiring the collective subjectivity attribute.

The perception of the need to take into account the resulting uncertainty of definitions has caused and continues to cause numerous discussions regarding the categorization of the object of study in question, a significant impetus to which was already given by F. Tönnis with his distinction between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* (community and society) (TÖNNIS, 2002).

One of the results of these discussions was the development of a narrow understanding of the territorial community phenomenon as a self-organizing group, a kind of community, which is particularly evident in the study of local communities. In particular, as defined by M.S. Dobriakova, a local community "implies social relations characterized by a high degree of trust, emotional depth, high moral foundations, social cohesion, interaction, and duration in time" (DOBRIAKOVA, 1999, p. 125). Consequently, a territorial (local) community is seen as a self-organizing entity, the existence of which effectively implies a high level of consolidation of its representatives.

Thus, the characteristic of a "community" is applied to one of the stages of developing a territorial organization of the population, which is hardly justified, since it does not take into account the multidimensionality and non-linearity of this process, the foundations of which are laid by the mere fact of common residence. We believe that a community does not arise only from the conscious activities of individuals; the connections and dependencies between inhabitants of the territory may be spontaneous, and the identification of an individual with the territorial community as a necessary condition for belonging to it is based not on the correlation with it, but on the emphasis of "selfhood" which reflects the identification process paradox (IDENTITY, 2017, p. 23).

The territorial community is formed, at least as a prerequisite, even before its representatives are guided by the principles of solidarity and mutual loyalty. Any territorial community is a continuously developing organism. Ultimately, this development is predicated on the idea of the reproduction of a territorial community, consisting of a simple or extended reproduction of its qualitative and quantitative characteristics. Of course, this assertion does not mean that chimeric (as defined by GUMILEV, 1993) and anti-systemic societies directed directly or indirectly towards destruction and self-destruction, cannot arise in history or in modern society indeed. But reproduction remains the dominant framework for social development.

For this setting to be successful in practice, it is necessary not only to have a complex of socio-economic and ecological-biological conditions, but also a well-defined spiritual environment «charging» people with an optimistic perception of reality and motivating them to take constructive action, as was convincingly demonstrated (GUNDAROV, 2001) using the example of demographic processes. This circumstance is, in fact, increasingly recognized by those who design urban infra-structure. In the course of these activities, in particular, special friendly spaces are created. V.L. Glazychev writes: "The essence of the term "sustainability" for city residents is in key notions of equality, dignity, accessibility; in the planning sense, it is creation of "friendly" places which constitute a city. The design and construction of these places is carried out by stimulating, rather than by directive measures, by creating favourable conditions for environmental changes in an evolutionary way, but with given characteristics. "Liveability" relies on the citizens' own experience" (GLAZYCHEV, 2008, p. 161).

The formation of such an environment seems a complex process, one element of which is the consolidation of the territorial community, which we mean a purposefully organized and managed process of strengthening interpersonal and inter-group ties in the urban community, reaching a common understanding on how to solve common urban problems through dialogue and cooperation.

In recent years, the issues of consolidation and the principle of solidarity that underlies it has been one of the most relevant topics of scientific debates (CONSOLIDATION OF RUSSIAN SOCIETY, 2015; SOCIAL CONSOLIDATION, 2017) which are based on a fairly long tradition of its theoretical analysis, because, as G.D. Kovrigina rightly writes "from the very first steps of social reflection, practically every thinker paid attention to social solidarity which actually makes society possible" (KOVRIGINA, 2020, P. 5). But, no less importantly, it is the subject of practical solutions and actions in the field of social governance. The topic of consolidation of the society has been repeatedly (directly or indirectly) addressed by the President of the Russian Federation (ZAKHAROVA, 2016). The idea of solidarity is present in the public statements of Patriarch Cyril, who stated: Today, as 400 years ago, the ideas of solidarity and concern for the common, not just the private, can and should become the societal glue of our society. No matter how much financial capital a man has, no matter how high his position is, he will not be fully happy without serving his fellow men. The more people will feel their social meaning, the social benefit of their committed cause, the stronger society will be, the smaller will be the distances between different social strata" (PATRIARCH CYRIL, 2019).

At the regional level, there is a unique experience of Belgorod District in developing and implementing the Strategy "Formation of Regional Solidarity Society for 2011-2025" (STRATEGY, 2011). Some consolidation practices have been developed and tested during its implementation (REGIONAL PRACTICES..., 2019) primarily at the micro (settlement) level.

But it is this experience that provides the basis for reflection on the process of consolidation of territorial communities, which is far from conclusive. We have already pointed out the contradictory nature of the Strategy process. It is, in particular, that while the idea is attractive, its implementation is met with a kind of passive resistance from the population. For example, annual social well-being monitoring of the population called "Quality Rose" legitimized by the Programme on Life Quality Improvement for the Population of the Belgorod District adopted in 2003, in 2018 (n = 8000) showed that only 28.5 per cent of people living in the Belgorod District had heard of the implementation of the Strategy for the Formation of a Solidarity Society. While 57.5 per cent of the Belgorod District residents consider it a success, only 42.8% of the population have an idea of what this society is.

One can find a good many explanations for why the strategy of consolidation objectively demanded by the specificity of territorial communities' development, remains on the periphery of mass consciousness. But in our view, the key reason is an unreasonably simplistic view of the consolidation process, the necessary conditions for its implementation and objective and subjective restrictions. Consolidation under this approach was seen as a project which, although conceived as a long-term enterprise, was not organically integrated into the overall logic of sociocultural development of the territorial community, is not part of what can be defined as a consolidation route.

We use this concept to characterize the modification process in the mass consciousness of the territorial community, which consists in the successive (step-by-step) approval of the prerequisites providing the assimilation of the consolidation idea as a behavioral norm. The purpose of the paper is to conceptualize the possibilities and limitations of designing a consolidation route of territorial communities.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The paper uses the fundamental ideas of transformational process researchers (ZASLAVSKAYA, YADOV, 1998) and social change theorists (SHTOMPKA, 2001) on the appropriateness of a systematic approach in the study of social processes in different types of organizations, as well as for sociological research of complex types of managed objects (AFANASIEVA, 1999); and the theory of social society (PARSONS, 2001).

The paper is based on the theory of social risks, according to which risk is increasingly becoming a levelling-off norm of everyday existence in an unstable social environment, as well as the theory of social anomies (a state expressed in the value instability of society). Constructing a route for consolidation of territorial communities presupposes the use of the social-technological method (theory of technologies of social management (DYATCHENKO, V.N. IVANOV, PATRUSHEV, SURMIN, TULENKOV, YEAR??) AS WELL AS THE THEORY OF SOCIAL ENGINEERING (ANTONYUK; BESTUZHEV-LADA; BERGER; LUKMAN; KOTLAROV, LUKOV, 1997).

The research also uses general and particular research methods, as well as comparative, systematic analysis, formal analysis, bibliographic research methods, and analysis of documentary sources. The materials of the author's sociological research "Renovation of sociocultural constants as a factor of reproduction and development of regional communities" were used to empirically substantiate the stages of the consolidation route and to determine the risks of its realization. The research was held in Belgorod District in January-April 2021 and included a large-scale questionnaire survey of the population using a quota sampling methodology (500 inhabitants of Belgorod District were interviewed, and the main parameters of the quota were: gender; age, residence; statistical error not exceeded 2 per cent).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The design and operation of the route can, in our opinion, be successful if a number of requirements are met. First of all, it's targeting. It is not only that the process of moving along the route at all stages should be subordinated to the achievement of the expected result (the state of the territorial community), but also a clear and meaningful definition of that result, which can neither devalue not to overestimate its importance. In the former case, consolidation is generally perceived as a political tool for the image of power. In the latter, it assumes the character of another utopia and the construction of a society of universal harmony. Experience has shown that the present limitations (social polarization, declining collectivist values, weakening of the regulatory influence of social norms) of setting such a goal is absurd. With these considerations in mind, we consider the creation of a communicative environment that ensures mutual loyalty of the members of the territorial community and interaction between them in solving common problems, and also their mutual assistance and protection in crisis situations as a real result of the movement along the consolidation route. At the same time, loyalty is defined by us, according to T. Parsons, as a readiness to respond to a duly «justified» call made on behalf of the collective or in the name of public interest or needs (PARSONS, 1997, p. 25).

The path of territorial consolidation requires internal logic. The essence of this requirement is that each of its stages must follow organically from the previous one and create the basis in turn for the subsequent one. To attempt to circumvent (ignore) any of them is an inevitable failure of the initiators of the consolidation process. Logic is ensured by the unity of purpose, which, in our view, is based on the idea of a gradual transition from a state of disintegration to one of integration through the production and dissemination of cultural samples. In line with this approach, we believe that the following stages of the route can be identified. First, territorial identification: the formation of perceptions on belonging to a territorial community

(IDENTITY, 2017, p. 501). It does not imply in itself a consolidated orientation of an individual, but integration into the structure of the individual is impossible without reference (at least formally) to the specific community. Second, a value group selection, that is, a choice in a common set of spiritual phenomena of meanings that are collectivistic and serve as a basis for constructive interpersonal and intergroup interaction. A special place among them is a value that can become an attractor drawing all other values to it. We believe that in Russia the role of such attractor can be fulfilled by the value of justice, which, according to the rather precise definition of E.V. Karchagin "in its ultimate basis, is an axiological universalism, universal sociocultural value" (KARCHAGIN, 2015, p. 31). That value is extremely important to the people of Russia. Valery Fedorov, the General Director of the All-Russia Public Opinion Research Centre, commenting on the results of the 2018 research «Social Justice in Russia», stressed: "The Question of Justice of our Eco-nomic and Social Order is one of the most important for Russians. And although "each has his individual justice", the actual image of social justice is gradually revealed by means of sociological surveys" (KRASNAYA, 2018).

Third item is the establishment of interpersonal and institutional trust, which is the expectation among the members of the community that other members will behave more or less predictably, honestly and attentively to the needs of others, in agreement with some general rules" (FUKUYAMA, 2004, p. 52). A sense of justice in the relations in which an individual is included is a prerequisite for the confidence of members of the territorial community. At the same time, in an atmosphere of trust, the need to hear the counterparty and to cooperate with it becomes relevant. We therefore define the fourth stage of the route as a phase of symbolic solidarity. It is a demonstration of mutual assistance and cooperation in solving common problems. Fifthly and finally, we emphasize the final stage of the route: an effective consolidation that involves the establishment of a functioning communications system within the territorial community and its use to solve common problems.

When constructing a route, it is important to imagine that at each of the stages there will inevitably be bifurcation points, suggesting the possibility of alternative traffic options. Their existence in each case creates risks of non-achieving the planned results as a result of the non-linear development of territorial communities. In particular, at the identification stage, risks are associated with the relinquishment of the entity from the community to which it actually belongs, by constructing a quasi-identity. For example, in the course of the sociological research "Renovation of sociocultural constants as a factor of reproduction and development of regional communities", conducted in Belgorod District in January - April 2021 and including a mass questionnaire survey of the population according to the quota sampling methodology (500 residents of Belgorod District surveyed), 8.2% defined their status as a citizen of the world, which may reflect the actual attitude of consciousness, but is most likely a form of peculiar epatage. At the value group selection stage, there may be an inadequate choice of priorities, which is made very difficult by a lack of consolidating values. Our research showed, among other things, that for the vast majority of Belgorodians, the value of family and family well-being (65.4 per cent) is in demand. While being attractive, it cannot be considered a collectivist value and can only have an indirect positive impact on the consolidation process. Potentially consolidating values received significantly less "votes": justice (24.4%), spirituality (22.6%), patriotism (21.8%), kindness (18.2%), collectivism (10.8%), and solidarity (10.4%).

Moreover, studies have shown that these values are interpreted very differently by citizens. The latter, in particular, is typical for defining the social justice principle content, which receives different treatment depending on the interests of a subject, and quite often it is not rationally reasoned. One cannot but agree with V. Rimsky, who writes: "People almost never justify justice with rational arguments. In specific situations, citizens determine what is just and what is unjust, intuitively, on the basis of their own social experience, which is different from each other. Rational arguments sometimes appear when people express their understanding of general principles of justice" (ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 2017).

Bifurcation risks also occur at other stages of the route. Thus, the process of building institutional and interpersonal trust, on the one hand, is often not carried out because of the high level of mutual alienation of actors. On the other hand, it takes the form of an abuse of trust, primarily on the part of authorities at various levels.

At the stage of symbolic solidarity, the main risk lies in the possibility of replacing the real consolidation process with a simulation of it limited to declarations and demonstrations of intent. This substitution is also typical for the operational consolidation phase. However, there is also a different risk, which has the opposite orientation and is associated with excessive administration, being an attempt to realize "forced consolidation".

Managing bifurcation risks requires participants in the consolidation process to be reflexive, with on-going critical evaluation of both their own plans and actions. It can never be expressed in the form of administrative coercion, involving a combination of regulation and self-regulation, with the voluntary participation of the widest possible number of territorial community members. This does not mean that consolidation should take place without any external influence, but only in a "soft" form of social regulation. It is a "process of regularizing social interactions, subordinating them to certain rules, norms, notions of duties, accepted in society, group, or social environment" (ZUBOK, CHUPROV, 2008, p.13).

Regulation in this case is oriented towards the application of point-wise effects in bifurcation situations, the creation of conditions for movement in the desired direction and the motivation of different groups of the territorial community to pass the route. The nature of these tasks determines the composition of the regulators and their functions.

Basically, there are three of them. First, an expert (intellectual) community whose mission is to conceptualize a consolidation strategy; to carry out analysis of bifurcation risks, and also how to deal with their negative effects; and to perform evaluation of the route stages. Second are state and municipal governments, whose primary function in this regard should be limited to the establishment of an infra-structure for consolidation, by which we mean the complex of physical facilities and their management system used for the formation and development of interpersonal and inter-group communications. Third are the civil society institutions that initiate and promote solidarity practices, including forums for communication, volunteering, charity work, and the establishment and protection of the environment of daily life. For this subject, regulation takes the form of self-regulation, i.e. autonomous regulation of the relationships in its environment and those that are developed with the counterparties.

CONCLUSION

In this way, a system of social practices can be built within the territorial community; it is oriented to-wards its reproduction and participation as an active participant in social processes. However, this potential opportunity can be realized only under a number of conditions. Among the most important are: real concern (up to apocalyptic sentiments) about the quality of organization of life and - especially - about the prospects for oneself and one's descendants; presence of a core of activists (leaders) capable of mobilizing others for constructive interaction; the wisdom of power to understand the limitations of its own capabilities and the need for social consensus.

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Territorial communities consolidation route

Rota de consolidação de comunidades territoriais

Ruta de consolidación de comunidades territoriales

Resumo

O artigo aborda o problema da consolidação de comunidades locais, pelo qual os autores referem-se ao processo propositalmente organizado e regulado de fortalecer os laços interpessoais e intergrupais em uma comunidade. Por rota de consolidação, os autores entendem o processo de modificação da consciência de massa da comunidade territorial, consistindo na aprovação sucessiva (passo a passo) dos pré-requisitos para a assimilação da ideia de consolidação como norma comportamental. Em cada estágio, entretanto, pontos de bifurcação e riscos de não atingir os resultados planejados tendem a surgir. A regulação, neste caso, envolve a aplicação de efeitos pontuais em situações de bifurcação, a criação de condições para o movimento na direção desejada e a motivação de vários grupos da comunidade territorial para transpor a rota.

Palavras-chave: Comunidade territorial. Comunidade local. Consolidação social. Solidariedade social. Regulação social.

Abstract

The paper addresses the problem on the consolidation of local communities, by which authors refer to the purposefully organized and regulated process of strengthening interpersonal and intergroup ties in a community. By consolidation route, the authors understand the process of mass consciousness modification of the territorial community, consisting in the successive (step-by-step) approval of the prerequisites for the assimilation of the consolidation idea as a behavioural norm. At each stage, however, bifurcation points and risks of not achieving the planned results are likely to emerge. Regulation in this case involves the application of point effects in bifurcation situations, the creation of conditions for movement in the desired direction, and the motivation of various groups of the territorial community to pass the route.

Keywords: Territorial Community. Local Community. Social consolidation. Social solidarity. Social regulation.

Resumen

El artículo aborda el problema de la consolidación de las comunidades locales, mediante el cual los autores se refieren al proceso deliberadamente organizado y regulado de fortalecer los lazos interpersonales e intergrupales en una comunidad. Por vía de consolidación, los autores entienden el proceso de modificación de la conciencia de masas de la comunidad territorial, consistente en la aprobación sucesiva (paso a paso) de los prerequisites para la asimilación de la idea de consolidación como norma de comportamiento. En cada etapa, sin embargo, es probable que surjan puntos de bifurcación y riesgos de no lograr los resultados planificados. La regulación en este caso implica la aplicación de efectos puntuales en situaciones de bifurcación, la creación de condiciones para el movimiento en la dirección deseada y la motivación de varios grupos de la comunidad territorial para pasar la ruta.

Palabras-clave: Comunidad territorial. Comunidad local. Consolidación social. Solidaridad social. Regulación social.