

Analysis of the Specificity of the Social Integration of People Living in Urban and Rural Areas

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Abstract: The study presents an analysis of the social integration of people living in urban (small towns and urban-type settlements) and rural areas Prokhorovsky, Rakityansky, Yakovlevsky of the Belgorod region (Russia). Sociological research is carried out by using the method of questionnaire which provided the primary data. This study describes the complexity and multi factorial process of social integration of the population in conditions of the Belgorod region. The study has found that the social integration of the respondents is associated with the concepts of “unity”, “partnership”, “agreement”, “solidarity”, “cohesion”. This study was prepared with the support of the Russian Humanitarian Science Foundation, project number 15-13-31004 and (p) “Volunteering in the regional system of social partnership, based on work with refugees”.

Key words: Social integration, region, solidarity, trust, lifestyle

INTRODUCTION

The range of issues related to social integration is one of the key issues in sociology. Key methodological approaches to the development of the theme of social integration were offered by such scholars as Bourdieu (1984), Durkheim (1984), Giddens *et al.* (2007), Simmel (1964), Lockwood (1964), Parsons (1964) and Homans (1958).

A significant contribution to the development of social integration theory was made by Granovetter (1983) and Putnam (2000) who distinguished societal community and social-cultural sphere as key concepts for repeated norm-oriented interactions essential for social integration. The representatives of such direction in social integration study as “communitarianism” Etzioni (1995), Moore (2009) Tam (1998) and Taylor (2003) also pay attention to the importance of values, norms and identity in their scientific works.

Integration processes in Europe in the late 20th century aroused scientific interest to the political and economic aspects of social integration which well as to its social and cultural grounds (Eder, 2001; Wienand and Wienand, 2010).

In recent decades, the main field of scientific research in the field of social integration has been related to the study of cultural changes caused by growing individualization, globalization, technological rationalization and migration processes (Allik and Realo, 2004; Kymlicka and Banting, 2006) as well as to the

relationship and correlation of social integration with such phenomena as social solidarity, social cohesion and social conjunction (Cureton, 2012; Domurath, 2013).

Today social integration is seen as a process of interaction between people which well as the characteristics of the degree of coincidence of values, goals, interests of different social groups and individuals (Tabylginova, 2001) and in this regard, the most important task of the state is to ensure the stable and secure socio-economic development of regions, municipalities, urban and rural areas, the specificity of which is determined by their socio-economic, engineering and technical, organizational and management structure, dynamics of development (Novikova, 2000) and historic-cultural features.

In spite of the obvious scientific interest to the problem of social integration, the interpretation of this concept requires further study which determines the relevance of the present survey.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study presents the results of a pilot sociological survey conducted in January and February 2016 in Prokhorovsky, Rakityansky, Yakovlevsky areas of the Belgorod region. The research covered the following types of settlements: urban (small towns and urban-type settlements) and rural areas. A study has been carried out by the method of questionnaire, in which the primary data was obtained. Sample: quota, multistage. The respondents

participated in the survey were: in Rakityansk yarea-60 people from urban and 50 people from rural areas; in Prokhorovsky area, 55 and 60, respectively in Yakovlevsky area, 70 and 65.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Belgorod region occupies a leading position in the Russian Federation based on a number of socio-economic indicators. It comprises 22 municipalities. As of 01.01.2015 data, the population of the region is 1547936 people, including, 106177 people in urban areas and 511759 people in rural areas. We represent the data obtained during the field study.

When asked, "How would you assess your life situation? Both urban and rural population confidently said that their life had some difficulties but they can be overcome (83% of rural and 75% of urban population).

Answering the question "What are the difficulties in your life? The respondents from the villages mentioned: problems in organizing their own business (46%); low income (60%); unavailability of social infrastructure (20%). Residents of urban areas noted poor environment (20%) and loneliness (10%). Health problems are a concern in both rural (46%) and urban areas (40%). People living in urban areas (small towns and urban-type settlements) and rural areas equally mentioned the problems associated with family life (10%) and lack of confidence in the future (20%).

The vast majority of rural residents (67%) and urban areas (55%) are satisfied with the socio-economic development of their territories. The quality of housing services is positively estimated by 53% of the rural and 50% urban population.

Two-thirds of the respondents (60% of the population in rural and 50% in urban areas) are satisfied with the quality of their social services.

However, only 29% are satisfied with the quality of health care in rural areas and 25% in urban settlements. The highest level of satisfaction with life and living conditions has been revealed in the countryside, 66% of respondents. In urban areas, this rate is 45%.

We noticed record ratings of satisfaction with presence/availability of cultural and leisure facilities, sports and recreational areas, 93% in rural areas and 90% in the cities.

Family relations as well as relations with neighbors and colleagues are good for 93% of rural and 80 urban settlements population.

More than half of those polled expressed a skeptical attitude towards the work of law enforcement officers. In general, only above 10% of respondents from rural and urban areas expect to be assisted by representatives of the authorities.

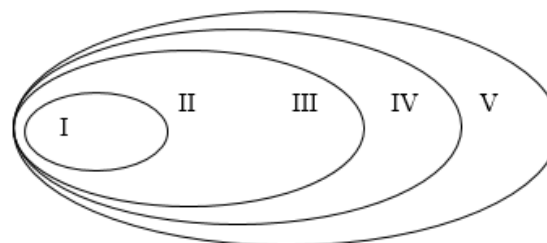


Fig. 1: Circles of trust

In addition, when answering the question "Whose help you can count on in difficult situations?" The <5% of all respondents in urban settlements and 1 of the villagers are expecting any assistance from public non-governmental organizations. The following options are the help colleagues with whom the person works (6% of people in rural areas and 5 of urban settlements). The variant of answer "helping neighbors" was chosen by 2% of the inhabitants of the village and by 5 of the representatives of small towns and urban-type settlements. The <60% of people in rural and urban settlements are counting on help of their relatives and friends. And 50% of rural residents and 35% of respondents from urban settlements chose the answer "counting on oneself only".

Only 10% of the rural population and 0% of the residents of small towns and urban settlements fully rely on the aid of state and local authorities. Considerable assistance from the state is expected from 30% of rural and 45% urban settlements population.

The 10% of rural and 15% of small towns and urban settlements population in the least rely on state aid in the achievement of their own goals in life. Mostly villagers (46.6%) and only 10% of the population of urban settlements largely expect coincidence and serendipity to be of help.

In rural areas, 42% of the population and 10% of representatives of small towns and urban settlements do not rely on the help from friends and relatives. To a large extent it is counted on by 33% of the population of rural and 20% of urban residents. Fully rely on the help of friends and relatives only 10% rural and 15% urban settlements inhabitants.

It has been found that there are five circles of trust among residents of urban and rural areas and they can be fairly easy to distinguish (Fig. 1).

The first circle is family and relatives. They are mentioned by about 53% of rural residents and 58% of city dwellers. The second circle is friends, neighbors, colleagues, that are pointed out by 16% of the villagers and 15% of city dwellers. The third circle is the management, local authorities and public organizations; they are indicated by 13% of rural residents and 12% of

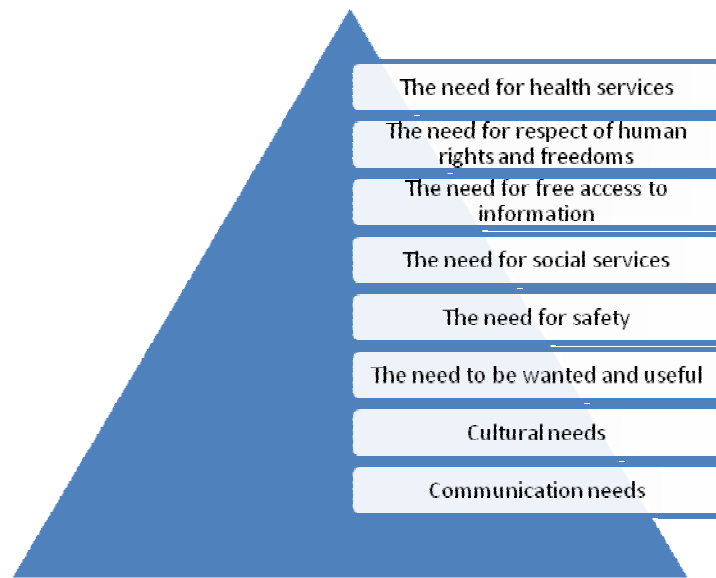


Fig. 2: Community needs satisfaction pyramid

respondents from small towns and urban settlements. The fourth circle is the church which has been given preference to by 10% of rural settlers and 9% of urban citizens. The fifth circle is the media and members of the virtual networks that are preferred by 8% of the villagers and 6% representatives of small towns and urban settlements in their responses.

Answering the question of to what extent a villager is integrated into the local community, 33% of the rural population considered themselves more or equally integrated in comparison with the residents of small towns and urban settlements. But over 50% of urban residents believe the villagers to be less integrated into the local community.

When asked about the importance of different values, most of the villagers and residents of municipalities have chosen answers “health”, “education of children”, “family happiness”, “prestigious job”, “money”, “religion”.

According to the survey, the most highly regarded aspects are work (80% of rural and 90% urban population) and wealth (86 and 90%, respectively), confidence in the future (86 and 80%), the importance of the work on the ground and housekeeping is more valued by the inhabitants of rural areas (69%).

Among personally meaningful activities “helping others” was noted (49% in rural and 45% urban settlements).

The results have showed that religion is important for 76% of the rural population and 70% of urban residents while only 36% of rural residents and 25% of respondents from small towns and urban settlements assessed it as a “very important” part of life. For 16% of

rural residents and 20% of city dwellers religion is “not very” important while for 5% of the surveyed citizens it does not matter at all.

According to the majority of respondents (64%), the Church, above all should meet the spiritual needs of the congregation, maintain social morality and ethics as well as participate in the preservation of cultural traditions. Over 90% of respondents from urban and rural areas believe that the church can contribute to the education of young generation, raising the cultural level of the population and uniting the people. Among the respondents, 70% believe that the Orthodox Church cannot promote democracy by participating in state management. Still, a little less than half of the survey participants (30% of rural residents and 20% of city dwellers) are convinced that the Church affects the social integration of the population.

In the survey, all respondents noted that there have been significant improvements in the social sphere in their territories. Social facilities and road transport infrastructure are being constructed and repaired, agricultural sector is developing. The possibility of employment has been mentioned by 26% of villages and 15% of urban settlers. Positive trends for the start and development of small business have become notable for 36% of respondents in rural and 30% in urban areas.

These results suggest that in recent years the local authorities have made considerable efforts to develop the social sphere and there have been evident positive changes in this field. The respondents’ answers to the question how they would assess the degree of satisfaction of their needs allowed us to build the following pyramid (Fig. 2).

When answering the question what the advantages of living in rural areas are the majority of two groups' respondents indicated favorable ecological situation as an advantage of rural areas (26%). Many people are attracted to the clean air, proximity to the river or other water reserve and the lack of big factories that produce harmful emissions. Another advantage is considered to be the possibility of producing their own food (16%). Tranquility, peace and remoteness from the hustle and bustle of big cities are huge benefits for many people living in rural areas (13%). However, 50% of respondents believe that the cultural level of the rural population is lower than that of people from urban areas.

As for the free time of the villagers, they have little time left for leisure. The main portion of free time is occupied with cultivating their private land (53%). It should be noted that the activities required to maintain order on the private land are not associated with recreational pastime but with hard work. In rural areas, it is one of the sources of the necessary consumption fund to provide oneself and relatives with organic products.

CONCLUSION

Thus, according to the study, an "average" resident of a small town and urban-type settlements as compared to an "average" resident of rural area has a wider choice of goods and services that he or she is able to consume without leaving their locality. The same applies to the possibility of getting a good education and realizing themselves professionally, to having constant access to cultural values and information resources. Places of employment and residence in the urban areas are usually spatially separated, while the farmstead and a plot of land of the rural resident is a place of residence which well as of production. Thus, an important socio-economic contrast between the countryside and the city lies in the fact that private farmsteads are essential to family income in rural areas.

Talking about the way of life in rural areas, it is necessary to bear in mind that living conditions in the countryside at the present stage of their development are not much different from those in urban areas. It is with some exception of the private sector, where citizens have to spare additional time and effort on cultivating their private farmland.

The content of the integration for population of various settlement types is manifested in gradual formation of relatively equal living conditions in urban and rural areas which are provided, firstly, by use and enhancement of positive features and advantages of

the village compared to urban settlements and by compensating a number of advantages of urban areas; secondly, by mitigating negative features of the working and living conditions and thirdly, by expanding the availability of resources to the entire population in rural and urban areas. Thus, the integration of urban and rural communities provides access to the use of the resources of small towns, urban-type settlements and villages.

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