

## A Russian Man in the Hinterland or Regional Sociology

On May 28, 2020, the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary Grushinsky conference “To Live in Russia. To live in Peace. Daily Sociology” began. It opened with a session of the section “A Russian Man in the Hinterland or Regional Sociology” which is traditionally conducted with the participation of the Vologda Research Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Before the beginning, the participants were congratulated by the chairman of the conference program committee, general director of VCIOM Valery Fedorov who expressed an opinion that it is possible to overcome the perception of remoteness due to modern digital technology – actual and in our minds. The Russian hinterland ceases to be such.

The section of the Grushinsky conference is held in the remote format for the fifth time. A.A. Shabunova – Director of VolRC RAS, Doctor of Sciences (Economics) – congratulated all the participants on this event. Wishing everyone good health in pandemic times, she noted that, in the Russian hinterland, where more than half of the country’s population lives, traditions are preserved, the meanings of people’s life and strategies for everyday life practices are being developed. There is a great opportunity for development of Russian regions sociology, and this will provide the increase of

fundamental science and wealth of applied studies.

The purpose of the section is to introduce the scientific world to studies conducted on regional topics and in regions. That is how it was planned to be five years ago. It was one of the first experiences of conducting a section in remote format. The geography of its participants constantly expanded. The first session was attended only by employees of VolRC RAS and Cherepovets State University, but the fifth section became international and brought together scientists from Armenia and Belarus, Moscow, Tyumen, Saransk (Mordovia).

During the session, it was proposed to discuss general and specific features of regional communities, the factors that can be called determining and ones that determine the uniqueness of our existence in certain territories. This is important for understanding how a person’s life develops in a small homeland, why a person stays and builds a life there, or why a person leaves this place. Main thematic areas were about issues related to identity, civic engagement, health in the system of human values and goals, and the practice of measuring social capital in the regional community.

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Scientists of VolRC RAS revealed the results of studies carried out within projects supported by RFBR. In the report “Deputy Head Teacher on Healthcare – Fantasy or Reality”, A.A. Shabunova raised serious questions about children losing their health and some parents’ inadequate idea about their children’s health state. The systemic reason for this situation was shown: at schools and clinics, parents and students themselves do not have a full attitude toward health-saving behavior. Healthy people are poorly supported. Perhaps, the health-saving function can be organized at school by a specialist – “deputy head teacher on health”.

It is extremely important, as G.V. Leonidova (Candidate of Sciences (Economics), Leading Researcher, Head of the Laboratory for Research on the Development of Labor Potential of RAS) stated in her speech, to pay attention to job satisfaction and the quality of working life itself, especially now – during a crisis. All of this affects the implementation of the national project “Labor Productivity and Employment Support”. Job satisfaction significantly affects productivity. The situation, generated by digitalization, will put new emphasis in the “employee-employer” relationship. It applies to new working conditions, wages, and rationing. It is necessary to supplement the labor legislation. The quality of working life has a significant impact on the civic activity of population. Yu.V. Ukhanova (Candidate of Sciences (History), Senior Researcher at VolRC RAS) devoted her speech to its study in the form of charity. The specifics of civil activity of the region’s population consist of the choice of mostly non-political forms. One of it was charity, which allows implementing altruistic aspirations of a person. People with a higher level of education, more often women, participate in charity. According to the researcher, in order to

increase its efficiency and attract more citizens to such activities, it is necessary to improve the institutional conditions for the work of charitable organizations and to increase trust in it by spreading information about positive examples. Another step may be the spread of civic education in society.

The problem of the older generation was raised in the reports of three participants of the section. V.N. Barsukov (Researcher at VolRC RAS) spoke about the barriers and opportunities for implementing the resource potential of the older generation. He identified institutional and individual barriers which make it possible to have a targeted impact on it. Scientists from Tyumen – E.V. Andrianova (Candidate of Sciences (Sociology), Head of the Department of General and Economic Sociology at the University of Tyumen) and M.V. Khudyakova (Candidate of Sciences (Sociology), Associate Professor at the Department of General and Economic Sociology at the University of Tyumen) – presented the results of the study on different types of social activity of modern pensioners, existing opportunities and obstacles for the implementation of a certain form of activities among older people. As the result, it was revealed that the latter should include not only economic barriers, low motivation of people of retirement age but also a low level of expectations from them from younger people and poor demand for pensioners’ activities.

In recent years, researchers became increasingly interested in various aspects of population’s life in small Russian towns. Small towns make up almost 70% of all towns in the country. It is not only the economic side of its life and opportunities of residents that matter but also emerging social relations that are accumulated in social capital. T.A. Guzhavina (Candidate of Sciences (Philosophy), Leading

Researcher at VolRC RAS) studied the state of Vologda residents' social capital who live in small towns of the region. The study, conducted on the basis of the methodology developed earlier with the author's participation, which allows assessing the state of the social capital of the settlement community, showed the existence of problems but did not reveal trends of a destructive nature. The level of accumulated social capital in small towns of the Vologda Oblast is lower than in large ones, but there are reserves for its growth. Small towns are the centers of municipalities and its resources extend to surrounding rural areas, so special attention should be paid to preserving and accumulating its social capital.

It is also interesting how such towns are represented in the local media. A study, conducted in Mordovia by I.A. Pakshina and E.S. Ruskina (Saransk, Research Center for Socio-Economic Monitoring), using content analysis methods, revealed a rather contradictory picture that is created by print media, associated with authorities and publics of local Internet-communities. The former presents positive information, and publics are full of criticism, dissatisfaction with the solution of urgent problems. In this regard, there are disagreements between a real image of a small town and an image created by the media.

The themes of the conference reports were quite diverse. Scientists noted the impact of digitalization processes on development of regions. G.F. Romashkina (Doctor of Sciences (Sociology), Professor at TSU) believes that people will be more attached to regions in the future, but their lives will largely depend on global trends, which may increase inequality. A feature of modern Russian society is uneven development of regions. According to V.V. Komleva (Doctor of Sciences (Sociology), Head of the Department of International

Regional Studies and Regional Management of RANEPA), one of the reasons for this situation is the methodology, used by the Center, to assess existing problems and the conclusions based on it. During the discussion, it was noted that a completely unacceptable and inherently false attitude of parents toward pushing children out of provincial towns to capitals was formed. It is possible to overcome this trend by taking into account social and cultural needs of population living in small towns and rural areas.

This year, foreign researchers from Armenia and Belarus were among the participants of the section. Scientists from Yerevan pay special attention to the consideration of such a complex phenomenon as identity. A.R. Vardanyan (Candidate of Sciences (Sociology), lecturer at the Department of Applied sociology of Yerevan State University) focused on the ethno-national mode of Armenian identity, noting that the ethnic factor plays a great role in the formation of identity for Armenian people. Ethnic characteristics are intertwined with religious aspects. The researcher also highlighted the role of the territorial factor in the formation of identity.

Speech of G.K. Tumanyan (Masters Degree in Sociology, Assistant at the Department of Theory and History of Sociology of YSU) was also devoted to identity: he studied aspects of identity in the discourse of modern Armenian citizenship. A.R. Vermishyan (Candidate of Sciences (Sociology), Associate Professor, Head of the Department of Theory and History of Sociology of YSU) and L.A. Babayan (Masters Degree in Sociology, Junior Researcher at the Faculty of Sociology of YSU) focused their attention on the crisis of rural lifestyle in post-Soviet Armenia. For the Republic, disappearance of villages, the reduction of the share of rural residents in the population structure, and increased migration to towns

and outside the country are relevant issues. The trend of the transition from local to global was discovered, the decrease of identity with a place of residence, a native village takes place. E.R. Vardanyan touched upon the issue of crisis in development of local self-government in Armenian communities, largely associated with the strong dependence of LSGs on the government, population's low readiness for self-organization, a drop of the social capital level in rural areas. A.V. Rublevsky (Belarus, Lecturer at the Department of Economics of Polotsk State University) presented to the participants of the section his methodology for assessing the social capital of an organization. He noted the fact that a drop in the level of social capital in an organization leads to its decline in society. This is largely caused by the trust of employees in management and vice versa.

The work of the section showed a wide range of problems that researchers deal with in the regions. The experience of the remote format has been accumulated over five years of the section organization, but, this time, a discussion was held in the conference chat, where the

problem of internal migration of population of various post-Soviet countries was discussed: it is observed in Armenia, Belarus, and Russia (in the context of small towns, population outflow, rural lifestyle crisis, unevenness of regions' development). The discussion may not always run parallel to the main line at a face-to-face meeting. Everyone can see the chat, anyone can ask a question or answer. The work of the section was held in a friendly and lively atmosphere.

The remote format provides another advantage – the increase of a number of participants. According to the organizing committee of the conference, 368 people expressed their intention to attend the work of the section, and 168 people watched the meeting. Views will continue. Presentations and the video broadcast itself are available on the websites of VCIOM and VoIRC RAS.

The format of the section was developed during the session, and its main priority was the focus on regional topics and the presentation of studies conducted in the regions.

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